

# HOHENZOLLERN

## TRAGIC PRIVATE LIVES





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DOUGLAS NORMAN PARKER

*The families of George I of England-Hanover, and his grandson  
Frederick the Great of Prussia.*

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*The life-shattering love affair of Princess Amalie and  
Baron Frederick von der Trenck.*

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This book also has a German Translation. Contact Douglas Parker for details.

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# FOREWORD

**T**hough this is a book about the surging power and fame of the English-Hanover and Prussian Royal Families in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it is much more. It is a story of the great private tragedies of many family members sacrificed along the road to glory, of the ruthless smashing up of illicit love affairs, of indestructible wills.

Two love affairs are covered in great detail.

Only one winner emerged from the bitter, ruthless power struggle played out within the northern German House of Brunswick-Luneburg-George I of England-Hanover. The big loser, his wife Sophie Dorothea of Celle (1666-1726), was imprisoned for the last thirty-two years of her life. Her lover Count Philip Konigsmark was murdered by George's family.

Just like her grandmother Sophie Dorothea of Celle, Princess Amalie of Prussia (1723-87), the youngest sister of Frederick the Great, was also struck down by a life-shattering love affair. Her lover, Baron Frederick von der Trenck, sat for eleven years in her brother Frederick's gaols, chained up like a dog in a damp, dark cell. Amalie became embittered and never married. Instead, she became a great musician. Trenck, a tearaway with immaculate aristocratic breeding, lost everything because he dared to love a Princess. He eventually died in the guillotine in the madness that was called the French Revolution.

This is also a story of George I (1660-1727) of England and his grandson Frederick the Great (1712-1786) of Prussia, of their unquenchable lust for power, interlaced with an intimate look into their tragic private lives and those of their parents and nearest relatives.

Frederick quite rightly earned his esteemed title of 'the Great' through his military prowess. During the Seven Years' War (1756-63) his tiny kingdom of just 3 million Prussians fought against a combined enemy of 45 million French, Russians, Austria-Hungarians, Swedes and Saxons and was NOT defeated!



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\*This painting with kind permission of the Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin. Scanned from *Friedrich der Grosse. Eine Ausstellung*. Heenemann Verlag, Berlin. 1986.

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1640-1786

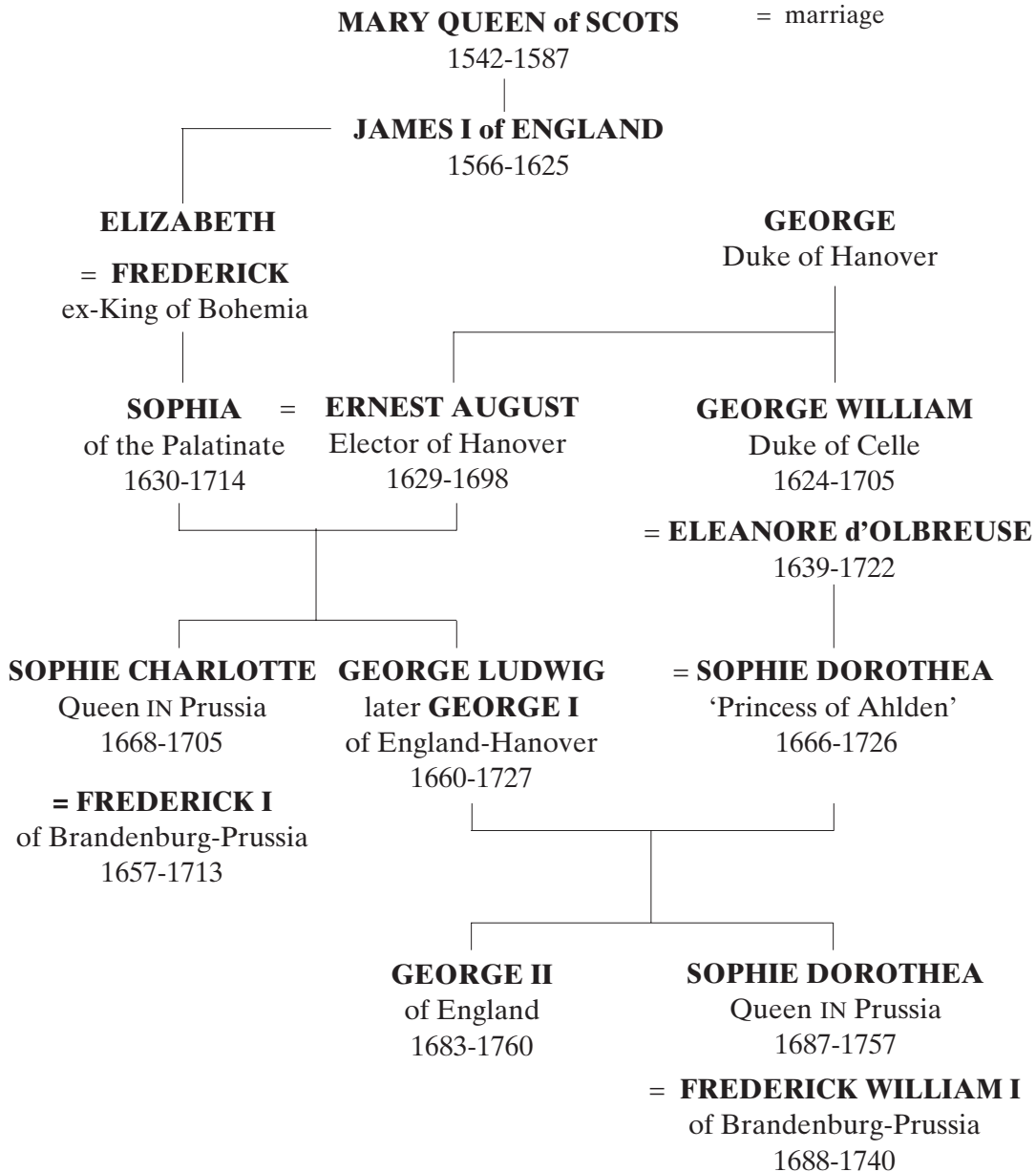
**FREDERICK WILLIAM**, Great Elector, b. 06.02.1620; d. 29.04.1688  
married **LOUISA HENRIETTE** of Orange (1627-1667).

Their son **FREDERICK I**, King IN Prussia, b. 11.07.1657, d. 25.02.1713  
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Their son **FREDERICK WILLIAM I**, King IN Prussia, b. 14.08.1688, d. 31.05.1740.  
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Their son **FREDERICK II, the Great**, King of Prussia, b. 24.01.1712, d. 17.08.1786  
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#### 4B. THE ENGLAND-HANOVER & BRANDENBURG-PRUSSIA LINEAGES



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- Electorate of Brandenburg, bought from the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund around 1413 by the Hohenzollern Castle Count of Nurnberg.
- Prussia gained from the King of Poland in 1618.
- The Dukedom of Cleves and the Earldoms of the Mark and Ravensburg were inherited in 1619.
- The Dukedom of Magdeburg, East Pomerania, Halberstadt and Minden, gained in the Treaty of Westphalia, ending the Thirty Years' War in 1648.
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- West Prussia, annexed in the First Partition of Poland in 1772.

# INTRODUCTION

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## TO THIS COMPLETE WORK

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This manuscript, in three Books, covers a period in history where the Crowns of England and what was to become known as Prussia (formed in 1701), became inextricably linked. During the second half of the seventeenth century the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg—with its domains in and around the north-west German cities of Hanover, Brunswick and Celle—grasped its opportunities, and by marriage, began to take a firm grip on the English and Prussian Royal Dynasties. By the middle of the eighteenth century their direct descendants sat firmly on the thrones of both Great Britain and Prussia.

The first of the German-born Kings of Great Britain was George I (1660-1727), who is a direct forebear of the current, much admired Queen Elizabeth II. George was the great grandson of James I of England. His family's history (1650-1730) is covered in Book I.

Frederick the Great (1712-86) was a grandson of George I. Frederick, the greatest King in the history of Prussia, is one of the most famous men in German history. Both his mother and three of his four grandparents came from George's family, the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg. In effect, that means seventy-five percent of Frederick's genes came from that single German Royal House. The German Kaisers descended from Frederick's family. His family's history (1620-1787) is covered in Book II.

Frederick the Great's parents, Frederick William I of Prussia and Sophie Dorothea of Hanover, were first cousins. His mother's parents, George I of Great Britain and Sophie Dorothea of Brunswick-Lüneburg-Celle, were also first cousins. It is no wonder that insanity struck down one of Frederick's sisters and, at the very least, temporarily affected his father Frederick William.

Though the marriage contracts within these Royal Dynasties were so arranged as to ensure the further aggrandizement of their own families, the private emotional life of almost every family member was quite devastatingly tragic. This is one of the two overwhelming themes which came through in my research. And through all the horrific private pain yet another theme seemed to completely dominate everything else—increasing power and ruthlessness—as the family made its way along the road to glory and unbelievable wealth.

This manuscript covers in great detail two tragic love affairs, though many others are also mentioned. The first took place between George I's wife Sophie Dorothea of Celle, the uncrowned Queen of England, and Count Philip Königsmark. Sadly Sophie Dorothea's affair with Königsmark ended tragically. George I's family had Königsmark murdered, and imprisoned the Princess till her death some thirty-two years later. The second tragic love affair was between Princess Amalie of Prussia, Frederick the Great's youngest sister, and

Baron Frederick von der Trenck. For more information now, please read the introductions to Books I and III respectively.

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When I first began what turned out to be five years of research for this manuscript I was primarily focused on proving whether a love affair had taken place between Princess Amalie and Trenck. That is why they make up more than half of my manuscript. Trenck claimed it happened. Most German historians claim it didn't. In Book III I believe I have proved it took place. That their affair occurred, and that Trenck made Princess Amalie pregnant, I have no doubt.

A detailed and intimate biography of Princess Amalie—the first German woman to compose at a professional level—is presented. Also the remarkable life of Trenck—who as a result of his affair with Princess Amalie sat in Frederick the Great's gaols for nigh on eleven years without his spirit being broken—has also been thoroughly researched. For more insight at this time on both these people please read the introduction to Book III.

To my knowledge my research covers virtually all the English and German literature published between 1712 and the early 1990s which mentions either Amalie or Trenck—and much more. My primary information was found in the British Library, London, and in the State Library and the State Archive, in Berlin. Many State documents, together with personal letters are published here for the first time.

My research has exposed a Royal Family full of private emotional tragedies which inextricably linked one generation to the next. That is why it is impossible to understand the love affair of Princess Amalie and Trenck without knowing what happened between Amalie's grandmother, Sophie Dorothea of Celle and Count Philip Königsmark, or visa versa.

And though the Royal Houses of Brunswick-Lüneburg and Prussia became wealthy and famous beyond belief, their private lives were as equally tragic, almost beyond belief. Though this is also story of the triumphs of their Dynasty, it is more a story of their almost unimaginable private tragedies and broken hearts.

In 1776 Frederick the Great wrote of the personal tragedy within his family: 'Our family seems to me like a forest in which a gale has knocked over the most beautiful trees, where one from time to time catches sight of a leaning spruce appearing only to be hanging on by its roots in order to watch the fall of its companions, and the damage and devastation made by the storm.'<sup>1</sup>

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Germany were difficult times. The Thirty Years' War (1618-48) and the Seven Years' War (1756-63) decimated the population. The terrifying bubonic plague devastated Prussia in 1709-10, and smallpox struck down the young in Berlin in 1766. Not infrequently scarlet fever and syphilis epidemics cut a swathe of death through the populace. When people got sick then, they suffered terribly; and the doctors, well they bled the sick just to make sure they died.

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Soon after I began my research in early 1993 my interest in unraveling the mystery surrounding Princess Amalie and Baron Trenck developed into a magnificent obsession. In November, as my plane took off from Melbourne Airport bound for London, a friend who accompanied me on the flight asked:

‘Douglas do you realize what today is?’ I had no idea because my twelve hour workdays had caused me to lose track of time. ‘It is the 09 November, Princess Amalie’s birthday!’ Incredibly, our plane had taken off a few minutes past midnight, on the ninth! I became overwhelmed with emotion, tears filled my eyes and from that moment on I knew my research work would be fruitful, because Amalie was with me.

Historical research is difficult because historians have trouble remaining objective. Frederick the Great succinctly explained the dilemma, describing most historians as compilers of falsehoods, interspersed occasionally with truth whose prejudices and ill placed zeal for their own nation, combined with their hatred of its enemies, inspire (illogical) passions which influence their opinions.<sup>2</sup>

Though Frederick von der Trenck’s autobiography was first published in the late 1780s, in his lifetime alone it sold around 40 000 copies in German, a huge number for the time. It was also translated into French, Dutch, Danish, English, Hungarian and Italian.<sup>3</sup> In 1912 Gustav Gugitz and Max von Portheim published a bibliography listing some 195 published titles of or to do with Trenck’s memoirs. Since then some twenty editions or adaptations have also been published. Even now, more than two hundred years after his death, the light still shines on the legend of Frederick the Great’s most (in)famous prisoner.

Douglas Norman Parker

6 January 2000

## **INTRODUCTION**

For full details of each reference please consult the Bibliography. Here are given the author’s surname, key title word(s) in italics and page numbers.

1. Hein, *Briefe Friedrichs*. p148.
2. Carlisle, *History of Frederick II*.
3. Grab, *Friedrich von der Trenck*. p22.

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# BOOK I

## GEORGE I's FAMILY

1650-1730

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### HOUSE OF BRUNSWICK-LÜNEBURG

Ancestors of the Brandenburg-Prussia and  
English Royal Families

### SOPHIE DOROTHEA AND COUNT PHILIP KÖNIGSMARK

The tragic love affair of the Uncrowned Queen  
of England-Hanover

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### MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Ancestress of the Hohenzollern Kings of Brandenburg-Prussia, and the Stuart  
and England-Hanover Kings of England.

# INTRODUCTION TO BOOK I

**I**n August 1714 George I (1660-1727) came to sit on the British throne as Great Britain was rapidly expanding to become the greatest Empire in the history of the world. His grandmother was Elizabeth Stuart, the daughter of James I of England. Interestingly, James came to rule England after Elizabeth I died unmarried and childless, some fifteen years after she had had his mother Mary Queen of Scots beheaded. This book covers the ruthless power struggle within George's family between 1650 and 1730.

In the second half of the seventeenth century a bitter, unimaginably ruthless power struggle was played out within the northern German House of Brunswick-Lüneburg from which only one winner emerged—the man who later became known as George I of England-Hanover. His wife and first cousin, Sophie Dorothea of Celle (1666-1726)—who remained England's uncrowned Queen—lost everything after she had an extramarital affair with the dashing Count Philip Königsmark. (Ironically, it was considered permissible for George to have as many affairs as he liked!) Not only did her in-laws steal her massive inheritance and imprison her till her death some thirty-two years later, but they also sanctioned Königsmark's murder. In time ruthlessness and hard-heartedness took George's family far. But simple compassion for another human being's miserable plight was something he and his family never had within them to grant.

George I and Sophie Dorothea of Celle were the parents of George II of England (1683-1760), and Queen Sophie Dorothea of Brandenburg-Prussia (1687-1757), the mother of Frederick the Great.

It must be remembered that the mother—and three of the four grandparents—of Frederick the Great of Prussia (1712-86), his sister Princess Amalie (1723-87) and their siblings came from the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg. That means seventy-five percent of their genes came from that single Royal House! So to be able to understand Frederick the Great's family I began researching George I and his forebears in search of their inherited strengths and weaknesses.

I strongly believe certain events within families are repeated down through the generations. For example, I have frequently heard of a father and his son who both had heart attacks and died at the same age. It must be remembered that Sophie Dorothea of Celle was Frederick the Great's, and naturally his youngest sister Princess Amalie's, grandmother. Interestingly, if Princess Amalie in her early twenties had a life shattering love affair with Frederick von der Trenck from which she never recovered and which haunted her for the rest of her life—as I emphatically believe she did, and which I prove in Book

III—she repeated exactly what had happened to her grandmother! And I do emphatically believe we repeat the mistakes of our ancestors. So to my way of thinking Sophie Dorothea's tragic love affair which dominates Book I adds considerable weight to my argument that her granddaughter Princess Amalie really did have an affair with Baron Frederick von der Trenck.

As I read through the three hundred or so desperate, even pathetic, love-letters of Sophie Dorothea and Count Philip Königsmark's which still exist I could not for a moment stop myself thinking I could have been reading the love-letters of Princess Amalie and Baron Frederick von der Trenck. Sophie Dorothea became known as the 'Princess of Ahlden,' because she was imprisoned in Ahlden Castle for the last thirty-two years of her life.

The main purpose of my research has been to prove that Princess Amalie had a love affair with Baron Frederick von der Trenck. Most Prussian historians claim it never took place. I emphatically believe it did, just as the tragic affair between Amalie's grandmother Sophie Dorothea of Celle and Count Königsmark took place. Consequently, I find it impossible to present my case about Amalie's affair in Book III without including Sophie Dorothea's story. For we surely, as night follows day, repeat what our ancestors have done over and over again, down through the generations.

And where did the ruthlessness of Frederick the Great and his father Frederick William I of Prussia have its roots? Primarily it came from George I's family, the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg. And personal happiness, well that never was allowed to get in the way of a Royal House on its way along the road to glory.

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# I

## HOUSE OF BRUNSWICK-LÜNEBURG

### ANCESTORS OF THE PRUSSIAN AND ENGLISH ROYAL FAMILIES.

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## SOPHIE DOROTHEA OF CELLE AND COUNT KÖNIGSMARK

Royal marriages have always been used as a means of ensuring the political survival and aggrandizement of Royal dynasties. And neither love nor the feelings of the bride or the groom were ever considered. Certainly in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and probably every other century before and since, it was not unusual for a married Prince to also have a string of mistresses. If he happened to strike up a lasting liaison with one of his lovers, this woman then often became formally recognized at Court. One of the most famous and most powerful mistress' was Madame de Pompadour (1721-64) who kept Louis XV of France entertained. It was also not unknown for the wife of an important Government official to get involved with her ruling Prince or one of his family. Such a woman could rise up to a position of power and influence within her master's Court only second to him. And many an aristocrat followed his master's lead and took a lover, while maintaining the facade of being married. As a consequence, complete marital breakdowns and divorce were fairly uncommon. Around 1705 in Berlin the Chief Minister von Wartenberg's wife was Frederick I's official mistress.

In 1714 George Ludwig, the Elector of Hanover\* became George I of Great Britain. Both he and his heirs to the British throne married German-born princesses. The first of these German-born Queens should have been Sophie Dorothea of Celle who was married to George for twelve years before their 'divorce.' Their two children, George August and Sophie Dorothea, both ascended European thrones as King George II of Great Britain and Queen Sophie Dorothea of Prussia respectively. Sadly for many years before their marriage George Ludwig had always seen the beautiful Sophie Dorothea through his mother's eyes, as the daughter of a self-willed French nobody, who had married above her station in life. Sophie Dorothea saw her husband as cranky, ill-mannered and one who was always letting the world know about his royal origins. Yet the poisoned hatred which destroyed their marriage had its origins long before either of them were born, when Sophie Dorothea's womanizing, irresponsible, playboy father George William passed his fiancée Sophia onto his younger brother. This sad tale begins back in the 1650s.

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\* There were nine German Princes who were Electors eligible to elect the Holy Roman Emperor.

In 1648 the Treaty of Westphalia ended the Thirty Years' War—a terrible war which cost the lives of up to one third of all the German speaking peoples in Europe. At this time the very Protestant and German House of Brunswick split into two separate lineages, Wolfenbüttel and Lüneburg. Though there were four Dukes of Brunswick-Lüneburg, Christian Ludwig, George William (born 1624), John Frederick and Ernest August (born 1629), only the two elder brothers inherited the enormous family wealth.

When he was just seventeen years old George William became the Duke of Hanover and immediately began to travel extensively. He soon became addicted to the frenetic, carnival atmosphere of Venice, and was often to return there. Within a short while he began to take Ernest August along with him. The two siblings had from their early childhood days been closely bonded to one another. Though a brave warrior, the wealthy George William was a womanizer who throughout his entire lifetime avoided responsibility whenever he could. Though both brothers had considerable charm, the landless and therefore penniless Ernest August, as his dire financial circumstances dictated, was forced to become the one ever on the alert to improve his station in life. By 1656 George William's subjects decided they had had enough of paying for his many years of idle pleasure in foreign lands, fifteen years of it to be exact. They demanded he become more responsible, return to Hanover, get married and produce an heir. Otherwise his allowance would be cut. But if he complied with their wishes he would get a handsome increase.

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### ***Sophia, The Mother Of A King And A Queen***

On St Valentine's Day 1613 the Stuart King James I of England, the son of Mary Queen of Scots, signed a marriage contract between his daughter Elisabeth and Frederick V, the Elector Palatine. Frederick, as the titular head of the Union of Protestant Princes, was himself a powerful Prince in his own right. He lived in a magnificent pink sandstone castle in Heidelberg. In 1619 Frederick decided to make himself the King of Bohemia. Unfortunately for him his claim was challenged and he sat on the throne for barely a year before he was driven off. Some claim his usurping of the Bohemian throne actually triggered off the terrible Thirty Years' War. From that time onwards things went from bad to worse for the ex-King. In 1623 the Holy Roman Emperor quite unconstitutionally transferred the Palatinate and its Electorship to Maximilian of Bavaria and Frederick soon found himself in impoverished circumstances.

Even so Frederick was still able to leave a remarkably stunning legacy to European history! This he did through his wife Elizabeth Stuart's thirteenth and last born child. However, when Princess Sophia (this spelling distinguishes her from Sophie Dorothea), born on 14 October 1630, came into the world it seemed certain her family's days of glory, together with its not inconsiderable wealth, had been lost forever. The family was so poor it was forced to live in The Hague on the good charity of others more fortunate than they. Things did not look like getting any better for Sophia when her father died when she was

just two years old. Sophia was brought up to speak German, Dutch, French, Italian and English fluently. But always foremost in her mind were her Royal origins—her grandfather was King James I of England. Her passion in life became to find a marriage partner to reinstate her to her rightful place in society. In 1648 some pride was restored to Sophia's family when the Lower Palatinate was returned to her eldest brother Charles Ludwig, together with a miserable annual payment in compensation for the lost lands. He was also made an Elector of the Holy Roman Empire.

When Sophia first met Ernest August of Brunswick-Lüneburg she thought him to be good looking and likeable, however as a landless, penniless Duke she determined not to marry him. Sophia's future seemed secure when she eagerly accepted George William's marriage proposal, for unlike his brother Ernest August he was rich. However the marriage was not to be. Within a short while the self-confessed bachelor visited Venice where he got involved with a Greek courtesan. Soon after he broke off his engagement with Sophia. Sophia never forgave George William, and she was to spend the rest of her life despising every woman who came into his life. George William knew Sophia and Ernest August liked each other, and so in an attempt to settle things down he suggested they get married.

The marriage negotiations took two years. First George William had to persuade his Hanoverian subjects the marriage would give them the Lüneburg heir they so desperately wanted. He promised Ernest August a handsome allowance and undertook that he himself would never marry. Furthermore upon his death the duchy would go his brother and his descendants. Sophia and Ernest August married in the autumn of 1658. Quite remarkably the bride was twenty-eight years old! At that time in history it was not uncommon for a bride to be in her mid-teens. At the very latest by her early twenties she had to be married off, otherwise she was virtually doomed to maidenhood forever. George William's so obvious and quite open delight at escaping matrimony infuriated Sophia. His later affair with Eleanore d'Olbreuse, which changed him from a womanizer into a loyal, faithful husband, further humiliated her. Sophia saw Eleanore as a nobody, and never ceased to direct her wilful spite at her and her family for the rest of her life.

During one year-long trip to Italy in which George William took an entourage of some two hundred people with him, including his brother Ernest August and the Duchess Sophia, the alcoholic, eldest brother of the family Christian Ludwig died. Seizing the opportunity presented, their other brother John Frederick shanghaied the dead man's estates. For a while it appeared a civil war would break out among the brothers, as each one strengthened his army. Fortunately in mid-1665 they reached a compromise which involved redistributing the family lands. The eldest surviving sibling George William got the largest share and became the Duke of Celle, while John Frederick became the Duke of Hanover and Ernest August got the small district of Diepholz.

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***Eleanore, The Mother Of An Uncrowned Queen***

The beautiful and spirited Eleanore d'Olbreuse was born in 1639, the daughter of the minor French nobleman Alexander II, the Marquis de Desmiers, the feudal lord of Olbreuse. Between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries the d'Olbreuse family had fought in all the wars involving the Kings of France. The family had married into the great Normandy houses of Taillebourg, Rochechouart and Tibaudière. More recently family members had swapped their armour for legal robes. Fate stepped in and prematurely ended Eleanore's time at the all powerful Louis XIV's resplendent Court at Versailles, after the King confiscated her Huguenot father's estates in a time of religious persecution. Eleanore's family fled to Holland in fear of their lives.

When the forty-year-old Duke George William of Brunswick-Lüneburg first met Eleanore in Holland and fell in love with her she resisted all his advances. Only under honourable circumstances would she yield to him. What could be done? Marriage was out of the question, for eight years previously the Duke had signed a Declaration of Renunciation agreeing never to marry. Finally George William promised Eleanore his eternal devotion and a large allowance. In November 1665 they signed an anti-contract of marriage. Eleanore was never allowed to forget her inferior rank by her in-laws, so much so, that for the first few months of her marriage she was never even allowed to eat at the same table as her husband and in-laws.

This example is but one of many you will read about in this chapter where the pathetic George William yields to his younger brother Ernest August and his wife Sophia. In time his inability to stand up for his wife and daughter would eventually lead to the destruction of both their lives. In time Ernest August's family would take almost everything they had of value. The prize was enormous for George William was one of the richest Princes in the whole of Europe. In time Ernest August, and his son George Ludwig, would steal their fortunes and persecute them to the grave. In time Ernest August's son and heirs would inherit the British throne. In time ruthlessness and hard-heartedness would take them far. But simple compassion for another human being's miserable plight was something they never had within them to give out.

Though Eleanore bore four daughters only Sophie Dorothea, born on 15 September 1666, survived. Somewhere around his daughter's fifth birthday George William bought her five small domains. Incredibly the purchase sent his brother Ernest August into a crazed frenzy, which was only appeased with a large sum of money. And George William had shown weakness yet again. Sadly a precedent had been set, a yielding precedent which was to have tragic, terrible consequences for his daughter.

George William loved to hunt, and he kept 370 horses and scores of hounds just for that purpose. Like many Princes of his day he tried to emulate the splendour of Louis XIV's Court. And even before living with Eleanore d'Olbreuse his Court had overflowed with French Huguenots, their clothing and their etiquette. Eleanore's arrival simply took the process one step further. Over a five year period the massive, old Celle Castle—it had over



180 rooms—was transformed into a magnificent residence. Eleanore became a popular hostess organizing the plays and concerts performed by visiting French and Italian troupes.

In 1672 Louis XIV's armies invaded the United Provinces of the Netherlands. After two years of warfare, George William led the Brunswick-Lüneburg troops of the Imperial army to a brilliant victory in defeating Marshal Crequi at Consarbruck. Later on in the campaign he reclaimed Treves and captured the Marshal.

George William bought the island of Wilhelmsburg, on the Elbe River near Hamburg, for his wife with the express purpose of gaining a title for her from the Emperor. Though Eleanore soon after became the Countess of Wilhelmsburg, once again Ernest August was only placated with a large sum of money. Other land purchases by George William on behalf of his daughter Sophie Dorothea made her a wealthy young heiress in her own right. Though Duke Anthony Ulrich of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel wanted her dowry, he would not allow her to marry his son until her parent's marriage was legitimized. Consequently in April 1676, a morganatic marriage (a marriage where neither the lower ranked spouse, nor his or her children, had any claim to the assets or titles of the higher ranked spouse) was contracted between George William and Eleanore. However the subsequent engagement of ten-year-old Sophie Dorothea and nineteen-year-old Prince August Frederick lasted barely four months before he died from wounds received during the siege of Philipsburg.

The three remaining Brunswick-Lüneburg brothers George William the Duke of Celle, John Frederick the Duke of Hanover, and Ernest August the secular Bishop of Osnabrück, all tried to outdo each other with the magnificence of their Versailles-style Courts. Year-round they shared the expenses of a French troupe of twenty-four players. Opera, ballet, plays and the latest fashion of masquerades (masked balls) entertained the Courts. Like George William, John Frederick had around 500 guards, fifty lackeys and more than twenty pages in his service. Their servants' resplendent livery reflected the wealth and wasteful indulgence of their masters, as did their many magnificent coaches.

Though Ernest August's wife Sophia insisted on strict etiquette being maintained at Court, behind a facade of decency sex orgies had become commonplace. Who could blame the Court, who just followed their master's example. The Duchess Sophia gave birth to six boys and a girl. Her eldest son George Ludwig, born on 28 May 1660, later became George I of England. The youngster was raised as a soldier. And sadly at Court he behaved as if he were still in the field. His cunning, plotting, ruthless father Ernest August wanted him to marry his cousin Sophie Dorothea. Though George William's Declaration of Renunciation had already promised his Celle duchy to his brother's family after his death, the marriage to his daughter made doubly sure they would get their hands on the rich prize. The marriage contract negotiations took a long time. As had become the norm Ernest August yet again extracted his pound of flesh from his elder weak-willed brother George William in the form of an annual allowance of 100 000 crowns and two fortresses.

In December 1679 the heavy drinking Duke John Frederick of Hanover died without leaving an heir. Suddenly, the once penniless Ernest August who succeeded him found himself



catapulted up onto an equal footing with the Dukes of Brunswick-Celle and Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. The new master of Hanover built a princely summer palace at Herrenhausen with a huge orangery—a glass house in which fruit could be grown year-round—that created a sensation. He also renovated the Leine Palace in Hanover with gold leaf, expensive tapestries and paintings. The princely Courts at Celle and Hanover shone out like beacons on a clear, black, moonless night for few European Courts came anywhere near matching their opulence.

Aggrandizement of their station in life was perhaps the only thing that bound Ernest August and his wife Sophia together. Though both were possessed with gaining power, it was Sophia's ambition which had no bounds, after all she WAS the granddaughter of James I of England and her mother had been, all be it for a very short time, the Queen of Bohemia. For good reason marriage between people of unequal birth and rank tormented the soul of Duchess Sophia. Her brother Charles Ludwig, the Elector of the Lower Palatine, had fallen in love with Baroness Degenfelt and divorced his wife. Sophia believed the liaison had such widespread repercussions as to cause her brother to lose all the family's dominions, which the French then usurped.

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### ***Sophie Dorothea's Tragic Marriage***

Sophia had always looked down on George William's wife Eleanore as a nobody, an upstart of inferior breeding. But she probably despised her more because she had been able to tame George William, the self professed bachelor—the very man who had broken off the engagement she herself had had with him. Sophia always reminded the weak-willed George William of his wife's inferior breeding. Pathetically he in turn ALWAYS cowered to the combined will of Sophia and Ernest August. Their ruthless pursuit of George William's wealth finally forced Sophia and Ernest August, after almost two decades of refusing to do so, to begrudgingly agree to recognize Eleanore as the Duchess of Celle. But they only did this to leave the way open for the marriage of their son George Ludwig to Sophie Dorothea. Eleanore thought the marriage would regain for her daughter the title of Duchess of Celle, which her father had many years before so foolishly signed away, and many more titles as well.

Meanwhile in December 1680 an attempt to marry off George Ludwig to the seventeen-year-old English Princess Anne was thwarted by the secret diplomacy of William of Orange who wanted, and in 1689 got, the English Crown for himself. Ironically, Anne succeeded William in 1702, and then George Ludwig, as George I, succeeded her! Finally after three years of negotiations Sophie Dorothea of Celle and George Ludwig of Hanover were married on 21 November 1682. The marriage at Celle was consecrated 'without any ceremony and without anybody's knowledge,' wrote the French envoy d'Arcy. Incredibly, or perhaps predictably, George William signed over all the property he had bought for his daughter to ensure her financial security over to her new husband. She was not told of her father's betrayal,

which left her with nothing but her clothes and her jewels. For the second time in his life George William had signed away the financial independence of his heirs forever, and simply handed everything over to his brother's family. At best he can be judged as a foolish, weak-willed man. At worst as merely a pawn forever yielding to his brother's demands, and as a man who placed his daughter's future in the hands of her merciless in-laws.

Duke Ernest August had always had a string of mistresses. But things changed after Clara Elisabeth von Meissenburg arrived in Hanover and married Frank Ernest Platen, Prince George Ludwig's tutor. Platen became a Minister in his master's Court while his wife was made the Mistress of the Robes to Duchess Sophia. Clara Platen was an evil woman. Above all else she wanted power and the privilege that came with it. This she achieved by becoming Ernest August's mistress. Quite amazingly her hold over him became so strong that she was able to manipulate him for the last twenty-five years of his life. And even the Duchess Sophia, fearful that she herself may be discarded like her brother had discarded his wife when she had complained long and hard over his mistress, simply accepted Frau Platen's status, as the First Lady of Hanover.

Ernest August set his mistress up in her own Court at Monplaisir, a palace half-way between Hanover and Herrenhausen. Behaving as though she were a Duchess, Clara gave audiences, accepted homage and handed out favours and reprimands. To gain her favour ensured a vassal he would also gain the favour of the Duke. Clara's banquets, which often outshone those given at the ducal palace, became renowned for superb entertainment, heavy drinking and sexual licentiousness. Clara was Hanoverian society. Her jewels and dresses far outshone even those worn by Duchess Sophia. Conformity in women's fashion was strong at Court. All the ladies looked like mirror images of one other with their rosy red cheeks, powdered white foreheads and breasts, scarlet coloured lips, jet eyebrows and coal black hair.

When Clara Platen finally gained the title of Countess her position seemed impregnable. After she gave birth to a daughter by Ernest August, she arrogantly christened it with the same name as the Duke's legitimate daughter Sophie Charlotte. The scheming Countess then set up her younger sister Catherine as young George Ludwig's mistress. It was her way of trying to maintain some control over the Prince, just in case his somewhat sickly father Ernest August died prematurely. When George Ludwig married Sophie Dorothea, the Duchess Eleanore insisted he get rid of his mistress. Countess Platen became furious at being outmanoeuvred. So even before her arrival in Hanover the new bride had made a deadly enemy.

Sophia Dorothea had light brown hair, an oval face, a beautiful complexion and an elegant neck. She was lively, quick-witted, danced well, played the clavichord and sang. Though in theory she was the second highest ranked lady at Court, she infuriated the dangerous Countess Platen by openly clashing with her in public and by refusing to acknowledge her unofficial position as First Lady at Court. The Countess was never one to forgive and forget. She simply sat back and waited for the day when she would destroy

Sophia Dorothea's life forever! Strict Court etiquette irritated Sophie Dorothea. While sometimes she made too much of a fuss over an unimportant visitor, at other times she barely acknowledged the presence of someone whose rank demanded greater recognition. When things at Court bored her she took her leave without covering up her reason for doing so. Sometimes she even stayed away from events organized by the Duchess. Simply put, the Court was scandalized.

Naively, Sophie Dorothea expected her husband to be as devoted to her as her father had been to her mother. But sadly her bubbling enthusiasm and quick wit left her dull, slow thinking husband feeling he was being made fun of. The marriage seemed doomed from its beginning. After George Ludwig had done his duty and got his wife pregnant he rejoined the Imperial army in its war against the Turks. Sophie Dorothea's son George August was born on 30 October 1683. In time he was to succeed his father to the British throne, as George II.

In the autumn of 1684 Ernest August's daughter Sophie Charlotte married Frederick, the Elector of Brandenburg, a widower some eleven years older than his bride. As soon his daughter had left for Brandenburg Ernest August took off for Italy. Using Venice as his base he stayed away from Hanover for almost two years. Quite openly Countess Clara Platen played out the role of his First Lady, while her husband, the Duke's Chief Minister, looked on as usual.

Countess Platen, seeing plainly that Prince George Ludwig was openly hostile towards his wife Sophie Dorothea, tried to exploit the situation and at the same time gain her future master's gratitude. Her plan involved introducing him to someone she thought she could manipulate, Ermengarda Melusina Schulenburg. Ermengarda was Sophie Dorothea's complete opposite, being Germanic, fair-haired, blue-eyed and unusually tall with a well-rounded body. Unfortunately for Countess Platen her plan soon backfired on her, as Ermengarda became the Prince's lifelong favourite. After he became George I of England he made her the Duchess of Kendal.

Sophia Dorothea was in a crisis. Marriage to her meant fidelity and mutual devotion to one another, as was the case with her parents. The rare meetings she did have with George Ludwig usually ended up exploding into severe quarrels after she directly challenged him about his affair with Ermengarda Schulenburg. One time Sophie Dorothea's verbal barrage so incensed the Prince that he shook her violently and almost strangled her. Somehow amidst all the turmoil the Prince again got his wife pregnant. On 26 March 1687 Sophie Dorothea gave birth to a daughter also called Sophie Dorothea. This child later became the Queen of Brandenburg-Prussia.

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### ***Sophie Dorothea And Königsmark***

The dashing Philip Christopher Königsmark, born at the Agathenburg Castle on 04 March 1665<sup>6</sup> at Stade, just north-west of Hamburg, between 5 and 6am,<sup>1B</sup> came from a distinguished

Swedish aristocratic family. His grandfather, a fearsome army general, had served with distinction throughout the Thirty Years' War. When that war ended in 1648 he was made the governor of the Swedish possessions of Bremen and Verden. Both Königsmark's father, who died in battle in 1673, and his mother's father were also generals. As custom dictated, young Königsmark began his army career in his early teens. He did his initial training at Celle, a duchy reputed for its military discipline. Interestingly, Eleanore d'Olbreuse was not only a friend of his mother but was also related to the French Königsmark's.

Königsmark's older brother Charles had many affairs with women before he proposed marriage to the wealthy English heiress Lady Ogle. But it was not to be, as her guardians rejected the offer and instead married her off to Thomas Thynne. A short while after Thynne was murdered by three men. A sensational trial followed. And though the prosecutor suspected Charles had organized the murder he was unable to break down his alibi. At this time Königsmark, in his mid-teens, had been in England for some fifteen months furthering his education. However after his brother's trial his family found it was no longer welcome in England and so he then headed for Versailles to perfect his French.

After Charles died in battle in 1686 in the Morea fighting against the Turks Königsmark inherited his brother's title and estates. Königsmark himself had already joined the Imperial army and fought against the Turks in Hungary and in the Morea. He must have more than impressed his superiors, for by the age of twenty-one he had risen to the rank of a Colonel. In late January 1687 he visited Hanover for the Carnival season, a virtual endless round of plays, operas, ballets and masquerades. After his regiment was disbanded he again returned there early in the new year and stayed for six months. In September good fortune again shone on him when his uncle Otto died and left him his large estate. Young Königsmark made up his mind to join the Duke of Hanover's army, and with this in mind he set up house near the Leine Palace in Hanover. Not surprisingly within a short while the handsome, wealthy, and not least dashing aristocrat, together with his two beautiful sisters Aurora and Amalie—all wildly hedonistic—became popular at Court. Königsmark's complex character exuded charm, but he could also be brutal and insolent. He was also a heavy gambler and drinker. Women simply found him irresistible. He spent his money as though it grew on trees by entertaining in the most extravagant style imaginable. And when he travelled he took enormous retinues with him at his own expense. In May 1689 he joined the Hanover army at the head of the Palace Guard.

Königsmark was first introduced to Sophie Dorothea by a mutual friend of them both, Prince Charles, who regularly visited the Princess on the days she held Court. At first there was nothing untoward about their meetings, as her lady-in-waiting was always present. Yet at the same time it was common knowledge Sophia Dorothea's marriage was in tatters. Her husband George Ludwig was publicly cohabiting with his mistress, the lovely blue eyed, blond haired, buxom Ermengarda Schulenburg. Things never ran smoothly for any length of time at Hanover without Countess Platen interfering, and so to speak, upsetting the apple cart. One evening at a ball the sinister Countess, who could only be slighted at the

perpetrator's peril, quite openly commanded the young Königsmark to meet her at her Monplaisir Palace. That night they became lovers. Soon after it began to dawn on Königsmark; he had placed himself in mortal danger by sleeping with the Duke's mistress. And so he decided to extricate himself from a somewhat sticky situation by running off and joining the Imperial army. Hopefully time and distance would help settle things down.

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In November 1677 William of Orange had married his first cousin the fifteen-year-old Mary Stuart. Mary's parents were James, the Duke of York and later James II, and Ann Hyde. Both William and Mary were grandchildren of Charles I of England, who had been beheaded in January 1649. The marriage drove a wedge between England and France, for Louis XIV was William's implacable enemy. In 1688 William and Mary became joint sovereigns of England after Mary's father the Catholic King James II had been driven out of England. Soon after William III, as he was known, became the head of the Protestant Grand Alliance, an alliance formed to check the expansion of one of the most powerful men in Europe, the so-called Sun King, the Catholic King Louis XIV of France. By early 1689 the French were no longer able to hold the Palatinate which they had held for several months. As they retreated, without mercy, they laid waste to the whole electorate, including the cities of Mannheim and Heidelberg.

When Königsmark eventually returned to Hanover he told Countess Platen their liaison was over and began seeing Sophie Dorothea again. However now he visited her without Prince Charles, who had died in battle in the Morea. The vengeful Countess Platen began to circulate rumours. Sadly Königsmark had committed a grave error by slighting the Countess. Eventually it would cost him his life.

The Duchess Sophia from personal experience knew a lot about the consequences of war. Her brother Philip had died in the battle of Rethel in 1650, while another brother Rupert had served Charles I of England before becoming Charles II's Lord High Admiral. But 1690 was a particularly devastating time for Sophia. That year her fourth son Charles Philip died in the battle of Pristina in Albania and another son Frederick August was killed in Transylvania. Twelve years later she lost another son Christian as he fought against the Bavarians.

In the spring of 1690 the Hanoverian army led by the battle-hardened George Ludwig again joined the Grand Alliance's army to fight against the French at Flanders. Before Count Königsmark joined the campaign at the head of an infantry regiment he told Sophie Dorothea he was in love with her. It wasn't unheard of for high ranking ladies to have lovers. Indeed, the Princess' sister-in-law Sophie Charlotte, whose husband the Elector of Brandenburg was much older than she, had a number of younger lovers. Sophie Dorothea eventually conceded to allow Königsmark to write to her, indirectly via her ever loyal lady-in-waiting Eleanore Knesebeck. The Count's letters began in July 1690. Though he ceaselessly begged the Princess to write to him, it took her six months to do so. When Königsmark returned to

Hanover from Flanders Sophie Dorothea treated him with indifference, and kept him at arm's length by placing a wall of courtiers and ladies-in-waiting around herself whenever he visited her. The Count didn't know what to do, so he wrote to her: 'I am desperate at having so few opportunities to talk to you. I dare not even show my admiration for the eyes that give me life' and 'when I think I shall not be seeing you for a whole week I feel so desperate I want to plunge a dagger in my heart.'<sup>2A</sup> At a masked ball given by Königsmark, the vindictive Countess Platen tried to trap Princess Sophie Dorothea by stealing one of her gloves and putting it in a secluded pavilion from which two lovers were later seen making a hasty retreat. However at that time George Ludwig had no reason to chastise his wife, so he let the incident pass.

Königsmark's letters show he became Sophie Dorothea's lover in the spring of 1691. From that time onwards his letters became much more demanding and intimate in nature. His shy lover was fearful their affair would soon become public knowledge, which in turn would put her in great personal danger. After the lovers became uncertain of their ability to hide their feelings for one another in public, Sophie Dorothea asked Königsmark to stay away from Court functions and her afternoon audiences. But when he stayed away she accused him of being unfaithful. And when he heard from others she had enjoyed herself too much, he flew into a jealous rage. Though by necessity the lovers clandestine meetings had to be infrequent, the less they saw one other the more the suspicion and the jealousy grew between them. Nevertheless, almost daily Königsmark sent letters to his lover, sometimes even twice daily.

The womanizing Königsmark used to boast about his conquests with the fairer sex. But this time things were decidedly different. He was well and truly smitten and for Sophie Dorothea's sake he had given up sleeping with other women! The lovers weren't entirely naive; they knew it was only a matter of time before their affair became public knowledge. The pressure continued to build up. It was becoming unbearable. And constantly Sophie Dorothea accused Königsmark of having other mistresses on the side. But his answer to her was simple. After having loved a goddess how could he possibly look at mere mortals?

While in the Imperial army campaigning against the Turks Königsmark had contracted malaria. Since then terrible attacks had intermittently wracked his body with pain. During one especially severe attack, as he lay shattered on his bed, he wrote one pleading letter after another to his lover begging her to visit him. But Sophie Dorothea's replies cut him to the bone. It would be better for all concerned if he left Hanover forever. And yet, though she commanded him to go away, she never really wanted him to do so. It was simply the fear of being caught out which tore her apart, and at times it made her think and act irrationally.

Königsmark became desperate. He was prepared to abandon everything—his mother, his family, his friends, his possessions and his country—if she were only prepared to escape with him: For 'the joy of seeing you far surpasses any ambition I might have for my future.' And 'the thought of possessing you is so precious to me.' As soon as I recover from my illness and can walk again I will 'kiss you in the familiar places.'<sup>3A</sup> Within a short while Königsmark recovered sufficiently to again be able to visit the Palace. Again he was unable



to control himself, and soon his all too frequent visits began to attract attention. Once again the Princess told him to stay away unless his duty forced him to attend. Yet again Königsmark fell sick and was confined to bed, perhaps more lovesick than anything else. When he next presented himself at Court Sophie Dorothea treated him so coldly he was prepared to believe the worst. The affair must be over! But after he spent a desperate night, torn apart, a letter arrived. Its contents were clear. His lover's indifference had only been a pretense. Nevertheless seeds of doubt had been sown in Königsmark's mind. And jealousy and suspicion began to dominate the relationship. He wrote: 'I hope you will not ask me again if I still love you. It will kill me if you still doubt me.'<sup>2B</sup>

After Sophie Dorothea suggested her lover find a wife and so save himself from imminent disaster his reply flowed from his heart: 'My death sentence has been written by the hand I adored.' But I was weak and believed all you said to me. Please don't make me marry. 'If my ruin does follow, as well it might' do not to abandon me. And remember one thing. 'My love for you will be extinguished only with my life!'<sup>2C</sup> However Sophie Dorothea was also desperately in love. And soon their secret liaisons started up again. But now she was becoming bolder. Königsmark explains: 'Never in my life was I woken up more agreeably. Never was a man happier than me if it is true you love me and you swear your love will last forever.'<sup>2D</sup>

After George Ludwig suffered a bout of measles Sophie Dorothea, trying not to totally alienate her husband, nursed him through it. Quite predictably, her generosity backfired in her face. The Prince was not grateful, and Königsmark accused her of being 'in another man's arms.' Sophie Dorothea's passion for Königsmark ran hot and cold. Her not infrequent icy coldness began to haunt his tortured soul. His fear of losing her began to possess his mind. Yet again Sophie Dorothea told him to leave her alone. Königsmark countered. He would volunteer for war service in the Imperial army in the Morea. His threat must have shocked Sophie Dorothea, for a short while afterwards the lovers spent the night together in her rooms. It was one of the few times they were able to spend the whole night together. For a few moments in time their tortured hearts were one. Before they met Königsmark wrote: 'tonight I shall embrace the loveliest woman in the world, I shall kiss her sweet lips, I shall gaze into the eyes that enslave me.'<sup>2E</sup>

In early 1692 the Duchess of Saxe-Eisenach, her husband and their entire Court arrived in Hanover for the Carnival season. The Duchess was known to be promiscuous. She quite openly chased after the dashing Königsmark. Though he swore to Sophie Dorothea he had rejected the Duchess' advances, doubt and jealousy plagued her. That year most of the Carnival was celebrated at Celle. Despite their constant childish jealousies and squabbles, the lovers were able to steal some precious time and spend some nights together in the Princess' rooms.

The Duchess Eleanore knew her daughter was involved with Königsmark. In writing he warned her not to let her mother bring an end to their affair. Nevertheless, the lovers knew time was running out. At some stage their affair would be exposed. As their secret meetings became more and more difficult to arrange, they began discussing the idea of

running away together. After Königsmark left for Hamburg to visit one of his estates, the Princess wrote to him: 'I spent the rest of the night without sleeping, and the day talking (with my lady-in-waiting Fräulein Knesebeck) about you and crying because you have gone away.' My love for you 'will stand any trial, and whatever happens to me, nothing will ever part me from the man I love.'<sup>2F</sup> After two of Sophie Dorothea's letters arrived in Hamburg with unfamiliar seals Königsmark suspected someone had broken them open and resealed them. He immediately warned his lover to stop writing to him. Sophie Dorothea was severely shocked, terrified the affair would soon be exposed. When Königsmark returned she rarely spoke to him in public and refused to meet him privately. The fairy tale seemed to be over.

In June 1692 Ernest August ordered his troops to prepare to march to Flanders, where as part of the Grand Alliance army the three-year-long war against France would continue. But instead of readying his regiment for war Königsmark, knowing he may not see Sophie Dorothea for six months, neglected his duty and moped around the Leine Palace. At the last moment his lover yielded to his impassioned pleas to see her. On 12 June she wrote: 'I have no news of you and I am desperate; I am very worried and fear a thousand things. I was hoping to see you after the review' and 'that false hope kept me at my window for two whole nights' as I waited for you to visit me.<sup>2G</sup> Königsmark couldn't make the rendezvous because he was being pursued by one of Countess Platen's spies. In the next letter he received Sophia Dorothea sounded desperate. She had thought a thousand times of following him and pleaded to him that he remain faithful to her.

After hearing yet again that the Princess had displayed her usual vivacity at a Court function Königsmark filled his next letter with jealous, even vitriolic, innuendo. He even threatened to leave the Hanoverian service and accept a commission in the Bavarian army. In her reply Sophie Dorothea assertively dismissed his jealous suspicion as being without any foundation. Her heart was irrevocably committed to him. His severe words had torn her apart; she had wept bitter tears. Was he looking for an excuse to leave her? She would have no peace until she knew where she stood with him. Melancholy overwhelmed Sophie Dorothea and she feared someone might try to put an end to their relationship. Her next letter continued: 'I am in agony and cannot bear the pain your unjust suspicion causes me. You are making a grave mistake if you think I could possibly forget you. I am not capable of deceiving you. I love you passionately and no amount of unhappiness will ever turn me away from you. You drive me to despair. How do I know that someone does not keep my letters back in order to estrange us? I have a thousand reasons to fear the worst and you depress me further by believing me unfaithful.'<sup>2H</sup>

By this time the Princess was unequivocally committed to her lover. Yet Königsmark's letters continued to be filled with baseless, jealous suspicion. Long delays within the postal system further added to their fears that the other was being unfaithful. In July alone Sophie Dorothea wrote at least seven letters to Königsmark: 'I miss you so much I shall never let you leave me again. I would rather expose myself to danger than live without seeing you. I would gladly renounce the world in order to retire to some corner where I would see no one



but you.<sup>2J</sup>

Königsmark, as a warrior who had fought in many wars, was far from impressed by the Grand Alliance army. His judgement was more than verified when Louis XIV defeated it in late July 1692. Disunity, petty grievances and jealousy had constantly worked against the Alliance. During the campaign Königsmark had voluntarily taken part in a battle in which his own Hanoverian troops had been held back in reserve. Both William III of England and the German Princes, including George Ludwig, liked the Count and had great respect for his ability to command his 3000 men.

Fear wracked Sophie Dorothea's thoughts as she awaited word of her lover's fate: 'God, what would become of me if something happened to you? I shall not be able to control my emotions and I shall go to you at once to look after you. Never leave me again and if you love me stay the rest of your life with me.'<sup>2K</sup> In an attempt to allay her lover's jealous disposition Sophie Dorothea constantly kept him fully informed of her daily activities. In turn, Königsmark knew he behaved badly, as he tried to explain: 'My jealousy springs from the violence of my love, so I hope you will always forgive me when this madness comes over me.'<sup>3B</sup> By September Königsmark hinted to Sophie Dorothea that people were working to separate them and to drive him away from Hanover. Countess Platen's spies had been busy collecting incriminating evidence. That the affair had survived months of separation further rubbed salt into the wounds of the rejected, vindictive Countess. Countess Platen began to spread around a rumour that when Königsmark returned he was going to take a large mansion in Hanover. Though outwardly he would share it with his sister Aurora, in reality it would become his and the Princess' secret love-nest. The Countess then goaded Duke Ernest August into action to stop a scandal involving his daughter-in-law from breaking out. Marshal Podewils was sent to Hamburg to tell Aurora not to return to Hanover. When Königsmark heard the news he wrote to Sophie Dorothea. His letter arrived with its seal broken open! How much longer would it be before everything exploded in their faces, and ruined their lives forever? Time was fast running out.

If Countess Platen could not have Königsmark for herself no one else would have him either! Königsmark knew how it would all end when he wrote: The Countess 'robs me of the only joy I have in the world. I lived only for you, I wore your chains with joy; you were my joy, my divine beloved, my all.'<sup>4A</sup> By mid-October, unlike most of his fellow officers, Königsmark had still not been given leave. He resolved to resign his commission if it was not forthcoming. By the month's end Sophie Dorothea wrote to him to forget about trying to get leave, to hurry as quickly as possible to Hanover, as the coast was clear. On 08 November, after a week's hard riding, Königsmark dressed incognito, secretly arrived in Hanover and went into hiding. Suddenly five months of mourning faded into oblivion as the lovers met secretly over the next few days. Then Königsmark, dressed in his uniform, reported to Marshal Podewils that he was absent without leave. The Marshal had known Sophie Dorothea most of her life. In fact he had been one of the few people to attend her wedding ceremony at Celle. Not only did he like Königsmark but had been generous towards him.

Though he well knew why his young Colonel had been absent without leave he took no action, and allowed him to stay on in Hanover.

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### ***The Electorate Of Hanover***

At that time Duke Ernest August's attentions were focused elsewhere. It appeared his long awaited dream of elevating his dukedom into an electorate was at hand. As he took off with his son George Ludwig to meet the Emperor, the Princess stayed behind. Again, if only for a short time, the lovers were able to secretly sleep together. A joyful Königsmark wrote: 'Last night made me the happiest and most contented man in the world. Your embraces showed me your tenderness, and I could never doubt your love.'<sup>4B</sup>

With a frenzied, unquenchable thirst, Duke Ernest August had been forever plotting, ever ready to seize an opportunity to improve his station in life. Though he had come into the world as a Duke he had been born landless, for all intents and purposes penniless. In return for marrying George William's spurned fiancée Sophia his brother had given him a large allowance and made him the heir of his enormous estates. Good fortune again shone on Ernest August when he became the Bishop of Osnabrück. His power had further surged after his elder brother John Frederick died and he was made the Duke of Hanover. Ernest August broke with tradition when he decided his eldest son George Ludwig would inherit all his wealth, instead of dividing it up among all his sons. His second son Prince Frederick August, a year younger than George Ludwig, so strenuously opposed his father's will that he was ordered in 1685 to join the Imperial army fighting against the Turks. His father further belittled him by refusing to give him any troops as custom dictated, but sent him off to war like the son of an impoverished nobleman. Sadly in 1690 the Prince died while fighting in Transylvania.

Prince Maximilian was the next brother to challenge his father. He decided to try secret diplomacy in order to thwart his father's will. Though the plot's details are somewhat unclear it included Duke Anthony Ulrich of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, Government Ministers at Celle and Brandenburg and Count Moltke at Hanover. Finally Maximilian's sister Sophie Charlotte, the wife of the Elector of Brandenburg, exposed all to her father. In December 1691 Maximilian and several important Court officials were arrested. The gates of Hanover remained shut for two days. Seven months later, after a lengthy trial, Count Moltke was publicly beheaded. The Prince, who had been kept under house arrest in the castle of Hamelin, was forced to join the Imperial army. Fortunately, within a short while he was allowed to return to Court.

For many years Duke Ernest August had sent troops to fight the Emperor's wars, firstly against the Turks and then later against the French in Flanders. Of course he expected to be rewarded for his loyalty. In December 1692 he travelled to Vienna to accept his Electoral Bonnet from the Emperor. However the other Electors of Brandenburg, Saxony, Bavaria, Bohemia, the Palatinate, Metz, Treves and Cologne refused to admit him into the Electoral

College. And it was not until 1708, some ten years after his death, that the Elector of Hanover was finally recognized by the other Electors.

Sophie Dorothea's affair with Königsmark and the many letters she exchanged with him placed her in terrible danger. And yet her lover still doubted her loyalty! After watching the Hanover Court's celebrations of its new Electoral status, where Sophie Dorothea stood beside her husband George Ludwig and acknowledged the acclaim of their adoring vassals, Königsmark imagined his lover was again sleeping with her husband. His reaction was predictable, a letter to her crudely penned and full of jealous insults.

Within a handful of years Königsmark had squandered most of the enormous wealth he had inherited. What he hadn't personally wasted, the regular allowances he gave his two sisters and his aunt had eaten up. But most of all Königsmark was his own worst enemy. At Hanover he had a household of twenty-nine servants, and stables overflowing with more than fifty horses and mules. Simply put, he lived far above his station in life. His heavy gambling losses and his inability to recover loans from ungrateful men like Frederick August of Saxony, later called August the Strong, simply tipped the scales further towards the inevitable, bankruptcy. It was all just a matter of time. After his successes during the Flanders campaign Königsmark should have been promoted to a general. But this did not happen, for his superiors wanted to fire up his discontent so he would leave the Hanoverian army. There is no doubt Königsmark was an extremely competent officer. The Swedish army, and probably also the English, the Bavarians and the Danes, had offered him a generalship. But sadly it was too late. He was no longer able to contemplate life without Sophie Dorothea. For her he had sacrificed his career and his honour: 'For you I will give up all my interests, family, career, relations, sisters' and 'follow my love anywhere in the world.'<sup>20</sup>

After speaking with Marshal Podewils and Prince Ernest it suddenly dawned on Königsmark that his affair was common knowledge within the Court. Only one thing seemed likely to placate the dark forces. Königsmark began to visit the enemy, Countess Platen. He was so in love with Sophie Dorothea that almost certainly nothing happened between himself and the Countess. But at least she could parade him around as her lover, even if it wasn't true. And Königsmark hoped this would appease the malicious streak in her. It had been Sophie Dorothea's idea that Königsmark try to placate the evil Countess. It seemed the only way to hold back the threatening black clouds that were forming around them. And the tactic even worked for a few months. The Princess was closely watched to prevent her from seeing her lover. Behind the scenes forces were at work to keep the affair away from public view. However things didn't always run according to plan and at least once the Princess was involved in a public brawl with the Countess, when the latter held onto Königsmark's arm and forced Sophie Dorothea to back down.

While visiting her mother-in-law, the Duchess Sophia, in Luisburg Sophia Dorothea beckoned her lover to come to her: 'Knesebeck sleeps in the small room next to mine. You can come in by the back door and you can stay twenty-four hours if you so wish, without the slightest risk.' I take a walk every evening. 'I shall be waiting for you from ten o'clock to

midnight. You know the usual signal, make your presence known by giving it.'<sup>2L</sup> In the same letter she begged Königsmark to begin seeing the Countess again.

After being married for eleven years Sophie Dorothea received a major body blow when she found out for the first time she was totally financially dependent on her husband and his family. Though born the daughter of possibly the wealthiest Prince in the whole of Germany she now owned nothing! Not only would all her father's enormous wealth be transferred to her in-laws family upon his death, but in her marriage contract her father had signed over her not inconsiderable personal wealth to her husband, George Ludwig. The weak-willed, hedonistic George William's irresponsible behaviour left his daughter Sophie Dorothea totally unprotected. His constant yielding to his brother Ernest August's will was to have even more devastating consequences for her and haunt her to her grave.

Somehow the affair between Königsmark and Sophie Dorothea had survived more than two years. From its very beginning it had been fraught with terrible emotional upheavals and insurmountable, overwhelming difficulties. Though without doubt they had been constantly in each others thoughts, the Princess calculated they had only managed to secretly meet each other no more than perhaps twenty times over the course of a year. Königsmark's financial ruin seemed inevitable. He continued to live beyond his means; his creditors were rapidly closing in on him. Worse still Sophie Dorothea herself had been left penniless by her weak-willed father. And though the lovers dreamed of fleeing off together to find their *Shangri-La*, their straightened financial circumstances made it virtually impossible. At any moment everything could explode! Countess Platen had the incriminating evidence her spies had collected. The Court buzzed with gossip of the affair, and even Sophie Dorothea's womanizing husband George Ludwig was writing derogatory comments about her in his letters.

In the spring of 1693 Königsmark was transferred to the Hanover dragoons, still with the rank of a colonel. In late July many thousands of Danish troops were sent to attack the Celle fortification at Ratzenburg. Königsmark was ordered to go to Celle at once. His letter sent to Sophie Dorothea from his camp on the Elbe River never arrived. After not hearing from him for six days she was became terrified he had abandoned her: 'I have not heard a single word from you. How can you neglect me and humiliate me like this?' I have idolized you and sacrificed everything for you. But when a man falls out of love that is it. 'I am on the brink of utter disaster.'<sup>2M</sup>

Sophie Dorothea headed for Celle. The Danish threat became so great that there was talk about evacuating the women. The Princess wrote to Königsmark. Could they escape together in the confusion of the evacuation without being caught? If she really wanted to run away with him when the Danes crossed the river, he would gladly let them do so. But without any money he doubted she would really go through with the plan. During a supposed cease-fire, a Danish force made a surprise attack against the Ratzenburg fortifications and then demolished them. Soon after a peace treaty ended the conflict.

Many of Königsmark's dragoons were struck down by a mystery fever contracted while

in their marshy, riverside encampment. Somehow Sophie Dorothea also got the deadly fever. As she lay in her sickbed fighting for her life, wracked by violent fevers, she received many anxious notes from Königsmark. When the crisis was over she became fearful her lover would no longer find her attractive. Her fears were soon allayed by Königsmark's next letter: 'It is true your beauty set me on fire, and that without it I should not perhaps have been as happy as I am, but what made me as I am towards you is your mind, your sincerity, your ways, and finally your soul, so noble.'<sup>3C</sup>

Around this time the ducal families of Celle and Hanover resolved that a public scandal had to be avoided at all costs with respect to the marriage between the Hereditary Prince of Hanover George Ludwig and his wife Sophie Dorothea. The Princess' vehement protestations went unheard. When George Ludwig returned from the Flanders campaign she would have to live under his roof. After Königsmark heard the news he sent the Princess a bitter reply: 'I received the fatal news that your husband is in your arms.' Needless to say 'I am beside myself and only death can deliver me from the torment his presence makes me suffer. Oh how I hate him!' If you have his baby it will be the death of me.'<sup>2N</sup>

When Königsmark finally returned to Hanover he found out that Sophie Dorothea was for all intents and purposes under house arrest. It had become almost impossible for him to arrange a meeting with her. His close friends advised him to resign his commission and to leave Hanover. Time was running out. And as the pressure mounted Königsmark's debtors began closing in on him. Königsmark shared a terrifying, prophetic dream with his lover: 'My head was cut off because I was caught with you. I suffered more than a soul in purgatory. My greatest anxiety was to know what had become of you.'<sup>2P</sup>

In the spring of 1694 Prince Frederick August, later known as August the Strong, became the Elector of Saxony. Two years previously he had befriended Königsmark while fighting against the French at Flanders. Foolishly Königsmark had loaned him the enormous sum of 30 000 crowns, which of course August never repaid. Königsmark saw August's unexpected rise to power twofold. If he could get his money back he could pay off his debts. He also saw Saxony as a safe haven. The Elector warmly welcomed his old friend and invited him to his coronation. Soon after he accepted an offer to become a general in August's army. While in Dresden Königsmark often sat at the Elector's table and attended his drunken orgies. With time August became infamous for his debauched lifestyle, and at least one of his more than three hundred bastard children became his mistress. One evening, in front of many illustrious guests, a drunken Königsmark exposed the bedroom secrets of the Court of Hanover. He denigrated the Elector's lover Countess Platen, and spoke of George Ludwig's ugly mistress, Ermengarda. Almost immediately reports of Königsmark's drunken rantings found their way back to Hanover and Ernest August, egged on by the vengeful Countess Platen, hardened his opinion against Königsmark.

Everything was about to explode! Sophie Dorothea blatantly refused to live under the same roof as her husband. She then fled to her parents in Celle. George Ludwig decided to separate from Sophie Dorothea. As expected, George William, the Duke of Celle, showed

his daughter no compassion and soon after sent her back to Hanover. On her return journey she did not stop at Herrenhausen and pay homage to the Duchess Sophia as etiquette demanded. She had committed yet another grave mistake. Her enemies had further evidence of her willfulness.

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### ***Königsmark's Murder***

Foolishly Königsmark returned to Hanover in the second half of June. He told his secretary he intended to return to Dresden on 05 July and take up a general's commission at the head of cuirassier regiment. Remarkably he managed to set up a rendezvous with the closely guarded Sophie Dorothea. On 01 July 1694 the twenty-nine-year-old Königsmark left his house at 10pm with the intention of visiting his lover in her Leine Palace apartment. He was never seen again! There seems little doubt Countess Platen, with her master Ernest August's consent, played a major role in his disappearance and murder.

Two days later Königsmark's secretary Hildebrand reported his master's disappearance to Marshal Podewils. The next morning Court officials barged their way into Königsmark's house, seized all his letters and papers and then officially sealed the rooms. Count Philip Königsmark was well-known and had powerful connections all over Europe. His sister Aurora, a highly cultured seductress acknowledged as a great beauty, contacted the Saxon Elector, August the Strong. He demanded that the Count be released! The Duke of Hanover was also asked embarrassing questions by Anthony Ulrich of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel and by the Courts of Sweden, France, Denmark and Poland. William III of England's envoys were also making enquiries.

A year or so later the thirty-two-year-old Aurora Königsmark returned to Dresden, where she became the twenty-four-year-old August's resident mistress. Her new position at Court was officially celebrated with fifteen days of festivities. Nine months later Aurora gave birth to one of August's more notable son's, Count Maurice Saxe, the Duke of Kurland and Semgallen, who rose to the rank of a Marshal in the Saxon army. Her affair with August lasted two years.

Dr George Schnath recently investigated Königsmark's disappearance.<sup>1C</sup> Apparently, a disguised Königsmark was seen entering the Palace. Either just before or immediately after visiting Sophie Dorothea four well-known courtiers attacked and murdered him. The body was then put into a sack weighed down with stones, and thrown into the Leine River, never to be seen again. Two of the men, the Italian Count Montalban, and Stubenvol the husband of Ernest August's illegitimate daughter Laura, had personal grudges against Königsmark. The other two plotters Klencke, and Eltz who later became a Privy Counsellor, were supposedly Königsmark's friends. There seems to be little doubt the evil Countess Platen, with Ernest August's permission, organized things. Soon after the murder Montalban, the one who most likely carried out the execution, was handsomely rewarded from the Hanover treasury.



Wraxall<sup>5</sup> has another account of Königsmark's demise. He says he was seized and locked in a subterranean vault which was then flooded. Later the body was put into a heated oven which was subsequently bricked up. Wraxall claims that Blondel, the French Minister at the Court of Hanover from 1715 to 1726, told him he had got this story from one of the guards who had shut Königsmark in the reservoir.

From that time onwards Sophie Dorothea and her loyal till death lady-in-waiting Fräulein Eleanore Knesebeck, although subjected to severe cross-examination and intimidation, denied an affair had ever taken place between the Princess and the Count. The official search of Königsmark's house had uncovered Sophie Dorothea's love letters. Their contents added further fuel to the already raging fire. All was revealed: the Princess' bitterness towards the Hanover Court and its power mongers; her abhorrence of her husband George Ludwig; her contempt for her father-in-law Ernest August; her passionate words of love to Königsmark and her thoughts of escaping with him.

George Ludwig was told to write a polite letter to his wife requesting they again live together as man and wife. The trap was set. As expected Sophie Dorothea refused her husband's false offer, and she was charged with desertion. The powers that be found it was necessary to show up the Princess as the guilty party, so as to protect (the ever adulterous) George Ludwig's reputation. Such a ruling would ensure he retained her property without giving her any grounds to reclaim it. The case against Sophie Dorothea made no mention of adultery—as such claims could have brought into doubt the parentage of George Ludwig's children. On 17 July the Princess was taken under heavy guard to Ahlden castle, which lay some thirty-three kilometres from her parents' castle at Celle.

As expected, George William again cowered before his brother Ernest August's will and even agreed Sophie Dorothea's inheritance would remain in her husband's hands. Then he agreed to pay her a yearly allowance of 8 000 talers, which would increase to 18 000 talers when she turned forty. The Court hearings began in Hanover in late September and ended on 28 December. Sophie Dorothea was found guilty of willful desertion; her marriage was declared null and void. She was forbidden to re-marry. Her name was erased from all official documents and church records in Hanover. Her paintings were taken down. To all intents and purposes it was made to appear as though she had never existed.

Twelve days after Königsmark disappeared Eleanore Knesebeck, the Princess' loyal lady-in-waiting, was arrested, interrogated and gaoled. She languished behind bars for more than three years before her luck suddenly changed when an old friend disguised as a worker got himself admitted to the old Scharzfels fortress. Soon afterwards they successfully fled the scene, after they both scaled down the side of the castle walls on a rope. Eleanore Knesebeck, a woman of great resolve, continued to fight for her mistress. Several months after escaping, despite the great personal danger of being seized by Hanoverian agents, she made her way to Vienna and petitioned the Emperor on Sophie Dorothea's behalf. She also wrote to the Duke of Celle, and begged him to give his daughter back the estates he had so willingly handed over to his brother Ernest August's family. In 1706 when Sophie Dorothea's

daughter Princess Sophie Dorothea married Crown Prince Frederick William of Brandenburg-Prussia. Eleanore went with her to Berlin as her lady-in-waiting. Quite remarkably in 1757, more than fifty years later, a Knesebeck was still serving the by then Dowager Queen Mother Sophie Dorothea at Berlin. It must have been Eleanore!

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***Sophie Dorothea, Imprisoned for Thirty-Two Years***

During her trial Sophie Dorothea was held at Lauenau, in Hanover territory. After the verdict of willful desertion was handed down against her she was again returned to Ahlden Castle, in Celle territory. It was 28 February 1695. Tragically the 'Princess of Ahlden' remained under guard till her death thirty-two years later. Sophie Dorothea was kept isolated from the world to prevent her from speaking out against her persecutors, and damaging the family name. For a long while after Königsmark's murder the heart-broken Sophie Dorothea's health threatened to break down completely. By cleverly imprisoning her in a castle within her father's own duchy, the outside world may have concluded she had retired there of her own free will. Her household was made up of forty-five people, together with forty guards to ensure she stayed within, fully isolated from the rest of the world. Every single person within her Court spied on her for the Duke of Hanover. It was a desperately tragic life. Many years later Sophie Dorothea was occasionally allowed to travel in her coach up to ten kilometres from the castle. All her mail was censored. Though she begged to see her children she was never allowed to see them again! Eventually her mother the Duchess Eleanore was allowed to visit.

The Treaty of Ryswick, signed by the Emperor Leopold, William III of England and Louis XIV in late 1697, ended the nine year war between the Grand Alliance and France. In January 1698 Duke Ernest August of Hanover died. The all controlling, evil Countess Platen, his mistress of more than twenty years, died two years later. On her death-bed it is said she not only confessed to having taken part in Königsmark's murder, but to have seen his ghost hovering around her bed.

Though Sophie Dorothea never mentioned her children in her many letters to Königsmark, she must have been kind to them as they always remained loyal to her. Her son later became George II of England. When he went to England he secretly took a full sized portrait of her with him. Years later her daughter Sophie Dorothea secretly corresponded with her from distant Berlin.

The death of Anne Stuart's son Prince William in July 1700 cast doubt on the line of succession to the English throne. (Anne was Queen of England between 1702 and 1714.) Theoretically the British Parliament had two choices: the exiled Catholic Stuarts living in France; and the Protestant Stuart, the Duchess Sophia of Hanover, a granddaughter of James I. But in reality there was only one choice, for years before Parliament had enacted a Law that the Monarch of Britain could not be a Catholic. In 1701 an Act of Parliament confirmed the succession in favour of the Duchess Sophia.



Sadly Duke George William of Celle died in 1705 without ever having made peace with his daughter Sophie Dorothea. Indeed he never saw her again after her divorce which had occurred some ten years earlier. However a clause in his will made her the beneficiary of the residue of his estate. And though her ex-husband George Ludwig had by now virtually everything her father and she had ever owned, quite predictably, his greed was not yet satisfied, for he even disputed her right to her father's silver plate. George Ludwig, by now the Elector of Hanover, finally realized his father's dream and merged the Celle duchy and the Hanover Electorate under the one flag. Though by now he had virtually everything his former in-laws had ever owned it was still not enough. Then he threw the Duchess Eleanore out of the Celle Castle and sent her to Lüneburg! Some twelve years later, in an almost unprecedented show of compassion, George Ludwig allowed the Duchess to return to Celle to live out her life.

Sophie Dorothea's son Prince George August made at least one attempt to break into Ahlden Castle to see his mother. It seems likely his lifetime feud with his father George Ludwig had as its fundamental cause the callous treatment his father handed out to his mother. George August, who eventually married Caroline of Ansbach in 1705, ruled as George II of England from 1727 to 1760.

The Duchess Sophia of Hanover—who had literally spent her lifetime reminding the world of her royal ancestry—ironically died less than two months before Queen Anne of England. Though her death extinguished her cherished dream of becoming the English Queen, her eldest son George Ludwig was proclaimed King George I on 01 August 1714. Though George arrived in London minus a wife, Sophie Dorothea's absence was never officially explained. Walpole, the great eighteenth century Whig statesman, who was Prime Minister of England for twenty-one years, wrote in his memoirs that nobody knew for certain whether the King was divorced. He thought he wasn't. What other reason would he have to keep the 'Princess of Ahlden' under lock and key?

Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, writing at the end of the eighteenth century, says the 'strongest evidence' existed that after Queen Anne's death a deputation of English peers and gentlemen, at the new King George's request, visited Sophie Dorothea at Ahlden. She was told of the injurious consequences her separation from her husband might cause, especially to her son. They reminded her that for slighter causes the birth of James II's son had been called into question. Far from yielding to the delegation's presentation or being dazzled by the prospect becoming a Queen, Sophie Dorothea point-blank rejected the overture: 'If I am guilty of the crime imputed to me, I am unworthy to be your Queen. If I am innocent, the King is unworthy to be my husband.'<sup>5</sup>

The eighty-five-year-old Duchess Eleanore died in early 1722. Almost to the very end she had visited her beloved daughter at Ahlden. Though the badly potholed roads between Celle and Ahlden must have made the journey nightmarish for the old lady it never deterred her from going and comforting her daughter who had lost everyone else she had ever loved. As was her wish, the Duchess Eleanore was buried without pomp, at midnight, next to her

husband. Her in-laws had always considered her to be a nobody. And even after her death they further slighted her by not installing her statue above her crypt. Eleanore left her enormous Dutch bank investments and the Olbreuse property in Poitou, with a combined worth of several million talers, to Sophie Dorothea.

Königsmark's murder remained in the public eye for decades. Many sensational books were published. Without exception each author questioned the behaviour of the House of Hanover in the affair. George I ordered that as much evidence as possible be destroyed including his divorce trial papers. As many as possible of his mother's letters went up in smoke, including all her letters to her niece Liselotte, the Duchess of Orleans, which the Duchess reluctantly burned at George's request. All the dispatches from the English envoys in Hanover and Dresden which mentioned anything to do with the Königsmark-Sophie Dorothea affair disappeared from British Government files. After Sophie Dorothea died George I ordered all her correspondence with her mother be destroyed. There was no end to the cover up! The question must be asked. What was George hiding?

Until her death at Ahlden Castle in 1726 Sophie Dorothea was constantly spied upon and kept under a heavy guard to keep her cut off from the outside world. George's fear of what she might say if she escaped must have been enormous. Though Sophie Dorothea's daughter Queen Sophie Dorothea of Prussia visited Hanover in 1726, she must have broken her sixty-one-year-old mother's heart by failing to visit her. At the same time the Princess accepted evidence that her only visitor from the outside world, a Count de Bar, had been stealing great sums of her wealth. It all became too much for the old Duchess. Her heart had simply been broken too many times. At 11pm on 13 November she let go of all her worldly concerns and finally escaped from her persecutors. In May of the following year her weary bones were laid to rest in the ducal vaults at Celle. And one cannot help believing that Königsmark was waiting for his lover, in a tranquil place, far removed from the people who had crucified them both.

Incredibly George Ludwig was still not satisfied. He had Sophie Dorothea's will seized and destroyed, so he and not their children got her property. All the Princess' papers were either burnt on the spot or sent to Hanover. One question must be asked. Why did Sophie Dorothea not meet with foul play while in Ahlden Castle? One story suggests the Duchess Eleanore's cleverness was responsible for protecting her from being poisoned by her ruthless in-laws. Knowing George Ludwig to be a highly superstitious man, one day the Duchess bribed a French fortune teller named Debora to warn him he would only outlive his ex-wife by a year and a day. In July 1727 George Ludwig while on his way to Hanover had what must have been an apoplectic attack and died. So the bastard did indeed die within the year and a day of the woman he had tormented. And one cannot help thinking that Sophie Dorothea had the last laugh.

George August became George II of England and celebrated his father's death by bringing out two portraits of his mother Sophie Dorothea, which he had kept in secret for over thirty years. Had his mother survived his father, George II said he would have brought

her over to England and installed her as the Queen Mother. Great wealth and position does not always bring great happiness. In the case of both George Ludwig and his father Ernest August, who was born landless, the lust for power and wealth was obsessive. Though kingships came to the family, many shattered souls lay in their wake, as they made their way along the road to power and glory.

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### ***In Conclusion***

The primary aim of my five years research for this book has been to better understand the lives of Princess Amalie of Brandenburg-Prussia and Frederick von der Trenck. But even more than this, to it has been to prove they had—though it was ever so brief—a love-affair. Amalie was the granddaughter of Princess Sophie Dorothea of Brunswick-Lüneburg-Celle. The more I researched Sophie Dorothea's love-affair, the more I realized the love-letters she exchanged with Königsmark could well have been strikingly similar to those that Amalie exchanged with Trenck.

It is no shock to me that a grandmother and her granddaughter both had tragic love-affairs in their early twenties, which in both cases their families tore apart, as I believe such tragic 'coincidences' occur within certain families. It is no shock to me that one of their lovers was murdered, while the other was imprisoned for eleven years. It is no shock to me that their heartbreaking love affairs continue to fascinate readers and researchers more than two hundred and fifty years later.

Königsmark joined the Hanover Palace Guard in May 1689. He became Sophie Dorothea's lover in the spring of 1691 and was murdered three years later. The Princess says she saw him perhaps twenty times a year. But at the beginning, and most definitely towards the end of their relationship they rarely saw each other. So in all they may seen each other at most sixty times. In my estimation Trenck and Amalie saw one another no more than perhaps twenty times.

And why are the remarkably similar coincidences of the two love affairs no shock to me? Because such things, so-called coincidences, repeat themselves within some families, down through the generations. In conclusion, Sophie Dorothea's love-affair with Königsmark adds further weight to the circumstantial evidence presented in this work that Frederick von der Trenck was indeed the lover of Princess Amalie of Brandenburg-Prussia. That they were lovers I have no doubt!

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# MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

ANCESTRESS OF THE HOHENZOLLERN KINGS OF  
BRANDENBURG-PRUSSIA AND THE STUART AND ENGLAND-  
HANOVER KINGS OF ENGLAND.

Way back in 1371 the wild and defiant Stuarts first gained control of the Scottish throne through Robert II, the Steward. The Stuart family history was strewn with shameful acts of incest. And few of their men ever died from natural causes, as brother murdered brother and child heirs met suspicious ends. The most famous Stuart, Mary Queen of Scots (1542-87), was the daughter of James V of Scotland. Not long after she was born her father died and she became Queen. When she was just sixteen years old she married the French Dauphin and seemed destined to become the Queen of France, the wife of one of the most powerful monarchs in Europe. However, fate had another course mapped out for Mary, and by a roundabout route her descendants came to sit on the thrones of England and Brandenburg-Prussia.

After the Dauphin's death in 1560 Mary returned home to Scotland and for a time was acknowledged by the Scottish nobles as their Queen. Her marriage to Lord Darnley, like she a descendent of Mary Tudor of England, in 1565 barely lasted two years before he was garroted to death. Mary's lover the Earl of Bothwell was suspected of perpetrating the dastardly deed. Three months later Bothwell married Queen Mary. However the Scottish nobles, far from impressed by the events, rebelled against their Queen and imprisoned her in Loch Leven Castle. She was coerced into abandoning Bothwell and abdicating her Crown in favour of her son, who became James VI.

Eventually the very Catholic Mary escaped to England where she somewhat naively asked her devoutly Protestant cousin Queen Elizabeth for protection. Mary was thrown into gaol and there she remained for the next nineteen years of her melancholy life. In 1585 Mary's life came to a spectacular end when she lost her head on the royal executioner's block after being found guilty of conspiring against Elizabeth.

In what seems to be a weird twist of fate Elizabeth remained unwed and childless. When she died in 1603 Mary's son James VI of Scotland ascended the English throne as James I. Even more incredibly, the new King had Mary's remains re-interred in Westminster Abbey surrounded by English Kings, aristocrats, great poets and famous politicians. In 1625 James was succeeded by his son Charles I. Both Charles and his wife the French Princess Henrietta Maria, the sister of Louis XIII of France, were very Catholic. Charles found himself in constant conflict with his Protestant subjects, the British Parliament and his Ministers. After a long civil war, which pitted Parliament against King, Charles eventually was overwhelmed. He was beheaded on 30 January 1649. Oliver Cromwell was the Lord Protector of England, Ireland and Scotland from 1653 till his death in 1658. The monarchy was restored in 1660

when Charles' son Charles II was crowned King. But like his father before him he also defied Parliament, and in 1681 began to rule without it.

In 1685 another of Charles I's sons ascended the English throne, as James II. After arousing the wrath of his Protestant subjects he was forced to abdicate and flee from England in 1688. Never again was a Catholic to sit on the English throne. And never again did an English sovereign try to suspend the Law or to dispense with the statutory penalties of an Act of Parliament. In 1689 William of Orange, the son of Charles I's daughter Mary, was invited to become King. At first he ruled jointly as William III with his wife Mary II, a daughter of James II. Mary died in December 1694 from smallpox. William III was succeeded in March 1702 by Queen Anne, another daughter of James II. Tragically, as with most of the Stuarts, Anne had trouble bearing children that survived infancy. Her seventeen pregnancies, of which only one child survived its second birthday, left her a semi-cripple.

The death of Anne's only surviving son, the eleven-year-old Prince William, in July 1700 threw the line of succession to the English throne into doubt for a while, until an Act of Parliament in the following year confirmed the Duchess Sophia of Hanover as next in line to the English throne. Queen Anne died in 1714. Sophia's son became George I of England, the ancestor of the present Queen Elizabeth II.

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## HOUSE OF BRUNSWICK-LÜNEBURG

### *SOPHIE DOROTHEA OF CELLE AND COUNT KÖNIGSMARK*

Ruth Jordan's excellently written and intensively researched *Sophie Dorothea* contains large chunks of the love-letters exchanged between Königsmark and Princess Sophie Dorothea, between July 1690 and June 1694. Though many were destroyed or lost, around 300 still survive in the Lund University library, Sweden, and in the Secret State Archive, Berlin. The Swedish letters were probably taken there by one of Königsmark's sisters. The Berlin letters could have been taken there by Sophie Dorothea's lady-in-waiting Fräulein Knesebeck, who went to Berlin with the Princess' daughter, Sophie Dorothea.

1. Jordan, *Sophie Dorothea*. \* A = p65, B = p80, C = p214-15.
2. Boscq de Beaumont, *Correspondance*. \* A = p34, B = p43, C = p45, D = p47, E = p52, F = p61, G = p63, H = p82, J = p95, K = p111, L = p211, M = p301, N = p310, P = p271, Q = p59.
3. Ward, *The Electress*. \* A = p472, B = p466, C = p480.
4. Wilkins, *The Love*. \* A = p240, B = p249.
5. Wraxall, *Memoirs*.
6. Schulz, *Die Ausgestorbenen*.

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\*These quotes were used with the generous permission of Sharon Kivity, the heir of Ruth Jordan.

# BOOK II

## FREDERICK THE GREAT'S FAMILY

1620-1787

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HOUSE OF HOHENZOLLERN

Rulers of Brandenburg-Prussia

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FREDERICK THE GREAT

## INTRODUCTION TO BOOK II

No family in the history of the world ever became the absolute rulers of a State of any significance without having 'the killer instinct' indelibly embedded within its gene pool. This ability to triumph over its enemies—whatever the cost—required a streak of ruthlessness which is unknown to the common man. And yet these rulers gained their power through their vassals, whom they sacrificed as cannon-fodder to conquer their enemies on the road to glory.

From the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg came the first two Queens of Brandenburg-Prussia: Sophie Charlotte (1668-1705), the wife of Frederick I; and Sophie Dorothea (1687-1757), who married Frederick William I. These two Queens of Prussia were the grandmother and mother respectively of Frederick the Great, his sister Princess Amalie and their siblings. What's more, three of the siblings four grandparents came from that House. That means seventy-five percent of their gene pool came from the Royal House of Brunswick-Lüneburg! So it is not difficult to imagine Frederick the Great and Princess Amalie would have carried many of the character traits of the Brunswick-Lüneburg family.

Frederick the Great (1712-86), Brandenburg-Prussia's greatest King, from the House of Hohenzollern, won his fame as a mighty, virtually invincible general during the two Silesian Wars (1740-45) and the Seven Years' War (1756-63). Incredibly, during the Seven Years' War his tiny kingdom of around three million vassals fought against—France, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Sweden and Saxony with a combined population of over forty-five million people—and he was NOT defeated by them! But do not forget for a moment that he was a ruthless man whose military triumphs were bought at a terrible cost, as hundreds of thousands of his vassals were sacrificed, and hundreds of thousands of others suffered terrible wounds. He did little for his peasants and never encouraged the talented members of that class. He believed the aristocracy was born to rule and the peasants had to be kept in their place. Though the surging military power of the Hohenzollerns throughout the first seventy-five years of the eighteenth century seemed unstoppable, their private lives were full of great tragedy. For the most part they were a sickly lot, and even insanity struck at the very heart of the family, at King Frederick William I, no doubt a result of incessant inbreeding. It was not unknown for a brother to marry his own sister's daughter, or the granddaughter of his own grandfather. And marriages between first cousins within the family were not uncommon. The Hohenzollern's, as did their Brunswick-Lüneburg relatives, married to bind alliances, not for love. As a result their private lives were strewn with broken hearts, their marriages and love affairs in the main being disastrously unsuccessful. And when Princess Amalie fell



in love with Baron Frederick von der Trenck, her brother Frederick the Great, in a very Hohenzollern way, smashed it apart and gaoled Trenck. In all Trenck sat in the mighty King's gaols for nigh on eleven years! Amalie never recovered from that heart-shattering blow. Instead, she dedicated her life to music to become the first German woman to compose at a professional level. Sentimentality and personal happiness were simply concepts the all powerful rulers of Brandenburg-Prussia couldn't understand.

Book II chronicles the brutal power games of King Frederick William I (1688-1740) of Brandenburg-Prussia. It also emphasizes strongly the tragic private lives of the King, his wife Sophie Dorothea of Hanover and their children, who included Frederick the Great and Princess Amalie. It is said that one must pay a price for everything in life, in the case of the Hohenzollerns, their surging power and fame was paid for at a great personal cost to each and everyone of them.

Frederick the Great played a major role in the tragic love affair between Princess Amalie and Baron Frederick von der Trenck, presented in Book III. The mighty King himself personally smashed up the affair and was constantly involved in supervising what happened to Trenck while he sat in his gaols for almost eleven years. Frederick's behaviour patterns, together with those of his family, give important background material essential to fully understand Book III.

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## I

## HOUSE OF HOHENZOLLERN

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RULERS OF BRANDENBURG-PRUSSIA

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*A Brief History (1400-1786)*

**I**N the early 1400s a Hohenzollern Count from Nuremberg bought the marquissate of Brandenburg for cash from the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund. The Rhineland territories of Cleves, the Mark and Ravensburg were inherited in 1609. But even after the duchy of Prussia was gained from the King of Poland in 1618, the Hohenzollern dominions barely ranked them alongside the Electors of Saxony and Bavaria. The Thirty Years' War ended with the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. The treaty conditions added the valuable possessions of Magdeburg, East Pomerania, Halberstadt and Minden to the Great Elector's Brandenburg-Prussian domains. Most of the soil in Brandenburg was sterile. Around Berlin and Potsdam the sandy countryside resembled a desert; only through unremitting tillage of the soil in some regions could thin crops of rye and oats be grown. In the ancient forests the land remained virgin. And where the soil was rich it was often marshy.

By the early 1700s Brandenburg-Prussia had grown to be one of the largest of the three hundred or so, mostly tiny, German speaking monarchies, electorates and principalities which made up the loose conglomerate of states called the Holy Roman Empire. The power and wealth of the Hohenzollern family was based on legal title to many scattered possessions. The Elector of Brandenburg was also the King in Prussia, the Duke of Pomerania, Magdeburg and Cleves and the Count in the Mark and Ravensburg, and so on. The Great Elector (1620-1688), his grandson Frederick William I (1688-1740) and his son Frederick the Great (1712-1786) transformed Brandenburg-Prussia from a disunited, scattered group of domains into a European giant able to stand up to its mighty, warlike neighbours of France, Austria and Russia. Each ruler in turn increased his own power by removing more and more authority from the landholding nobility and centralizing it and the bureaucracy in Berlin. The Great Elector began the process by imposing a system of indirect taxation, though the nobility was still exempt, and by establishing his own standing army which was 20 000 strong when he died in 1688. Without exception, his successors ascribe their greatness to his reforms. From the Great Elector's time onwards immigration of Protestant religious refugees into the sparsely populated Brandenburg-Prussian domains—it had a population density less than one-third that of England and France—was actively encouraged by the Government.

It is no wonder Frederick William I and his son Frederick the Great put almost all their resources into building up a strong army to defend their long borders and distant, scattered possessions. Not only did Prussia's isolation from the rest of the monarchy make it

indefensible in times of war, but Berlin itself lay just fifty kilometres (thirty miles) distant from the Saxon border. The acquisition of West Pomerania in 1720 added a desperately needed seaport to the monarchy. Then in the early 1740s the warlike Frederick the Great invaded and seized the large and immensely rich province of Silesia from Austria. He fought three wars—the First and Second Silesian Wars and the Seven Years' War—before Austria finally recognized his right to keep it. In 1744 Frederick's rapidly expanding domains were further enlarged when he inherited East Pomerania on the Dutch border. By the 1750s Brandenburg-Prussia had grown to be the fifth-largest European State. The Partition of Poland in 1772, 'the crime of the century' added the small but strategically important West Prussia to the monarchy. And finally the long isolated and distant East Prussia had gained a land-bridge to Brandenburg and Silesia.

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### ***The Great Elector (1620-1688)***

In 1640 twenty-year-old Frederick William, later known as the Great Elector, began his long forty-eight year rule as the Elector of Brandenburg-Prussia. He had grown up and been educated at the Court of the Prince of Orange in the Netherlands. In 1646 he married his first wife, the Dutch Princess Louisa Henriette of Nassau-Orange. Throughout his reign he was constantly plagued by enormous financial difficulties, even being forced to borrow money from his mother to pay for his Spartan marriage festivities. Louisa, a natural, petite, blond haired beauty, had a friendly nature which enabled her to quickly capture the hearts of her subjects. Like her husband she was clever and strong willed, and as a consequence she was able to strongly influence him and his policies. Often at the cost of her own health she followed him everywhere he went. For the first four years of their marriage Louisa lived in Cleves while the Elector had the old, fallen down Berlin Palace renovated. Many Dutch artists, master builders and landscape gardeners followed her to Berlin.

The Great Elector was a religious man who strived to bring the Calvinist reformers and the Lutherans closer together. He believed in the white woman, the ghost that appeared in the Berlin Palace shortly before its master's death. He also believed in alchemy, and set up a laboratory to make gold. After Louisa's first son died she offered to leave her husband so he could remarry. The offer was rejected. Her third born son eventually succeeded his father, and in 1701 was crowned as King Frederick I in Prussia. Louisa shared power with the Great Elector for some twenty-one years until 1667. She was just thirty-nine years old when she died of pleurisy. Her widower wept for her for a long time.

A year later the Great Elector married the dynamic Dorothea, the widow of Duke Christian Ludwig of Brunswick-Lüneburg-Celle. Dorothea was born a Princess in the House of Holstein-Glücksburg. Within a short while she was able to make an even greater impression on her husband than Louisa had done. She even went to war with him and endured the hardships of living in a field camp. Miserly and domineering, Dorothea never won the hearts of her subjects. They always saw through her supposed acts of charity, acts which were

always linked with some advantage she herself could gain. Her unpopularity among her subjects hit a new low after the shameful Peace of St Germain, when she accepted 100 000 talers and precious jewellery from Louis XIV of France. Frederick the Great wrote that his great grandfather ‘had no weaknesses, except for wine and his wife (Dorothea).’<sup>1</sup> All the Great Elector’s sons by his first marriage believed their stepmother Dorothea was trying to kill them. Suspicion fell on her after their youngest brother died the day after a ball she had given. A commission set up to investigate the death was eventually abandoned in 1688 after the Great Elector died. Dorothea died a year later. On another occasion Prince Frederick suspected his stepmother was trying to do away with him after he became sick, after drinking a cup of tea she had made for him. Did she really try to poison him so as to enhance her eldest son’s chances of ascending the throne? Though a law called the *Dispositio Archillea* prevented Dorothea’s children from inheriting land or subjects from the Great Elector, she was shrewd enough to find a way of buying the district of Schwedt with its three castles and thirty-three villages for her five sons and three daughters, so they would not end up penniless.

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### ***Frederick I (1657-1713)***

Prince Frederick was a somewhat puny child with a twisted spine, supposedly caused in infancy when his nurse dropped him on the floor. After succeeding his father the Great Elector in 1688, he neglected his duty to the State and instead pursued a superficial, hedonistic lifestyle which mimicked Louis XIV’s magnificent Court at Versailles. Disgustingly he squandered some 300 000 talers a year—around twenty per cent of State revenues—on household expenses. Remarkably that massive sum did not include money he frittered away on gifts and special events. Easter celebrations sometimes cost him up to 60 000 talers!

In 1701 the Holy Roman Emperor bestowed upon Frederick the title of King IN Prussia. And though he had achieved his greatest goal in life, it had come with a massive price tag attached—the lives of thousands of his vassals sacrificed as cannon-fodder fighting for the Emperor. Even so his Kingship was handed over ungraciously. The ruling Princes of Europe looked down on Frederick I as an upstart, as one who had bought a title. The Saxon Elector refused to acknowledge him. Louis XIV treated him with contempt. Incredibly, Frederick spent FIVE MILLION talers—the equivalent of more than three years of his monarchy’s total revenue—on his coronation! The cavalcade which travelled from Berlin to Königsberg, the Prussian capital, for the ceremony included more than three hundred coaches and wagons. Around 30 000 horses were needed along the way to keep them moving. It took twelve days to reach Königsberg, for Frederick only travelled in the morning! After each day’s travel a midday banquet awaited the hungry entourage.

Frederick married three times. His first wife, the sickly Elisabeth Henrietta of Hessen-Kassel, bore him a daughter. While Elisabeth’s life hung in the balance arrangements were already being made for the Prince to marry Sophie Charlotte of Hanover. Frederick’s second marriage was celebrated in October 1684, not long after Elisabeth took her last breath.

Though Frederick and Sophie Charlotte had a polite, formal relationship, they virtually lived separate lives. She lived most of the year at the newly built Lietzenburg (later known as Charlottenburg) Palace which was begun in 1689. Inside, the palace's rooms were magnificently furnished; outside, a Versailles-style garden was established with beautiful orange trees, rare flowers and lovely statues. Sophie Charlotte set up one of the first German music centres and gave magnificent masked balls, fireworks displays, concerts, operas and ballets.

Sophie Charlotte's first son died when he was just five months old. Devastatingly, her second son was stillborn. Finally in 1688 she bore the desperately awaited male heir. Christened Frederick William the dynamic youngster later became known as the Soldier King. As a child Sophie Charlotte had visited Italy with her parents and while there she acquired her lifelong love of Italian music and literature. In her mid-teens she stayed with her mother for a year at Louis XIV's Court. She could speak French, Italian, English and German. Her musical performances at Court became famous. Sophie Charlotte was serious and intellectual, but also cheerful by nature. Though she corresponded from Berlin with the world renowned writer and philosopher Leibnitz, he was not convinced of her great knowledge. In turn she complained that: 'he treats everything with me so superficially.'<sup>1A</sup> However, the famous English free-thinker Toland described her as the most beautiful Princess of her time, well-read, discriminating, with a good understanding of deep philosophical questions.

Sophie Charlotte was never required to be thrifty, and she never was. Both her Court and Frederick's Court were swamped with resplendently dressed servants. Her obsession for beauty led her to surround herself with handsome, but also intelligent courtiers. Her two Turkish servants Hassan and Ali became famous for their good looks and the magnificence of their livery. With Sophie Charlotte as its patron, French fashion took a pre-eminent place both at Court and throughout the city of Berlin. She also supported French plays and comedies and personally worked with the Court opera and ballet troupes. After becoming Queen she set up the first Berlin Court theatre and filled it with Italian and French artists. While on a visit to Hanover in January 1705 Sophie Charlotte developed a high fever and a serious throat infection which threatened to suffocate her. As her condition became critical she declined the help of a preacher, saying that after twenty years of serious religious study she was on good terms with God and would die peacefully. Though just thirty-seven years old, she apparently accepted her fate and died without putting up any real resistance. Perhaps Court intrigue which had been such an integral part of her life had finally worn her down? Certainly King Frederick's favourite, his advisor Danckelmann, had always tried to alienate him from her.

Frederick's third wife Sophie Louisa from Mecklinburg-Grabow was some thirty years younger than him. He married her just five years before his own death after his son Frederick William's two-year-old marriage to Sophie Dorothea of Hanover had failed to produce a male heir. Sadly Sophie Dorothea's first son, born on 23 November 1707, died when just five

months old. Apparently at his christening party the child threw a fit, supposedly brought on by the celebratory cannonade, from which he never recovered.<sup>2</sup> When Frederick died from tuberculosis in February 1713 he left Brandenburg-Prussia virtually bankrupt. A local wit posted a fitting testament to his memory on the palace wall: 'This palace is for rent and the royal capital of Berlin is for sale.' Frederick's Queen Sophie Louisa was sent back from whence she came. And not even her death was recognized in Berlin.

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### ***Frederick William I (1688-1740).***

On 14 August 1688 the sound of clanging church bells and cannon fire announced to the joyous Berlin populace the long awaited birth of Crown Prince Frederick William. He grew into a tough, bullying youngster who was difficult to control because of his boisterous, defiant and stubborn behaviour. Most of the blame for his bad behaviour must be placed squarely on his parents shoulders, for they never put sufficiently stringent limits on what he could do. The Prince's tutor Count Dohna left an indelible impression on his young charge. The Count was miserly with money; Frederick William, in stark contrast to his spendthrift father Frederick I, also became a miser. Dohna also tried to keep him away from women. This undoubtedly contributed to his later reputation as a man who not only disliked women but treated them roughly and crudely.

King Frederick idolized his son, but soon realized literature, philosophy and book learning were not for him. Consequently, in 1704 the King sent him on a long trip to Hanover, Holland and England, in the hope that he would learn through experience. Early on in life Frederick William developed his lifelong obsession, soldiers. Even as a youngster he used his pocket-money to set up a company of cadets. When he became King he spent over eighty per cent of State revenues on his army. His regiment of giant soldiers, which cost him the equivalent of ten regiments to maintain, became and remained his lifelong passion.

On 25 February 1713 Frederick William I, the Soldier King, succeeded his father Frederick I as the Elector of Brandenburg and King IN Prussia. At that time, compared to Britain's six million, Habsburg Austria-Hungary's ten million, France's twenty million and Russia's fifteen million people, Brandenburg-Prussia with around two million subjects was still a very small fish in a huge ocean. Since his early days, Frederick William had abhorred his father's wasteful lifestyle which in the end had left the kingdom virtually bankrupt. He immediately pulled the purse strings tight. Throngs of courtiers were dismissed. Traditional outmoded Court ceremonies were abolished, as pomp and grandeur at Court disappeared forever. The resplendent and famous Swiss Guard, its kettledrums and trumpets went too. Royal jewels, art treasures, thoroughbred horses and State coaches were also sold to pay off the crippling State debt. While his father had spent FIVE MILLION talers on his coronation, Frederick William spent the miserly sum of 2500 talers! Then he began to slash Government expenses and to fill his treasury, or perhaps better named his war chest—because he knew his monarchy was almost indefensible in times of war. Prussia and the Rhine provinces were



a long way from Brandenburg, and no mountain ranges or the like protected any part of his domains. He was surrounded on all sides by warlike neighbours, who if they wished could strike deep into his lands at any time.

Remarkably within the first four years of his rule Frederick William enlarged his army by fifty per cent, to around 57 000 men. By the time he died in May 1740 his army had over 80 000 men. The Little Sergeant, as he was also called, lived like a soldier. Severe, even cruel discipline, was used to create machine-like soldiers acknowledged as the best in Europe. Frederick William's brutality also expressed itself on days when he went hunting with his cronies, as he slaughtered wild game and birds in shocking numbers. Army colonels were paid to keep their regiments up to strength. New recruits were mainly acquired by some form of kidnapping. In 1714 a Berlin newspaper reported 7 000 to 8 000 skilled workers had fled the city because they feared becoming one of the 17 000 new army 'recruits.' Within twelve months the number of shoemakers in the city fell from 430 to 140. The mass exodus was only ended when Frederick William issued an edict forbidding army recruitment in industrial centres.<sup>3</sup>

At times over sixty per cent of the Brandenburg-Prussian army was filled with foreigners. In fact foreign recruitment brought some 300 000 to 400 000 mostly married men into the monarchy during the eighteenth century. Not only did Frederick William force the sons of noble families to serve in the army, but he established a cadet corps to educate them. Soon a new order emerged. Instead of avoiding army service and bad mouthing it, the aristocracy began to see serving their King in his army as the done thing, as something that enhanced their social standing in society. Sir Andrew Mitchell, the British envoy to Berlin who accompanied Frederick the Great throughout the Seven Years' War, described Frederick William as a ferocious despot who turned massive numbers of his vassals into soldiers for life. Each soldier's spirit was crushed by hard-hearted discipline. Not only were trivial offences severely punished but the men were poorly fed and scantily clothed. Often the King himself inflicted blows with a heavy cane on men he saw making trifling mistakes while handling arms. The peasantry was ground down. Their fear was such that nothing else was talked of but immigration, and many families did leave. Many men cut one or two fingers off their right hand to avoid service. The practice of kidnapping foreigners, regardless of their nationality or profession, and pressing them into Prussian service was widespread under both Frederick William and his son.<sup>4</sup>

Between 1706 and 1710 Frederick William took part in the campaigns at Flanders against the French, including the siege of Menin and the battle of Malplaquet. From 1715 to 1720 his army fought against the Swedish King Karl XII's army in Pomerania. The dispute was finally settled when he paid two million talers for Stettin and much of East Pomerania. Seckendorff, the Austrian envoy to Berlin and one of Frederick William's favourites, was a member of the King's *Tabagerie*, or tobacco parliament, the closest thing he had to a group of advisors. Though Frederick William's family and his Hanoverian wife Sophie Dorothea's family were both Protestant, he was also a vassal of the very Catholic and Austrian, Holy



Roman Emperor, Charles VI. The clever Seckendorff bribed all and sundry at the Berlin Court to successfully keep Frederick William politically aligned with Vienna. However in time Frederick William began to realize he was being used by the Emperor. In December 1734, his body almost broken by ill health, he wrote: 'I myself have complete veneration for the Emperor, but after my death the House of Brandenburg will abandon' him 'and take another side.' Presently 'Prussia looks like a parrot in a cage,' and that must change.<sup>21</sup>

Many years later, as the Seven Years' War raged, in December 1758 the Imperial Field Marshal Count von Seckendorff, on the orders of Frederick the Great, was seized by hussars at his Meuselwitz estate and imprisoned in the Magdeburg fortress. Some five months later he was swapped for Prince Moritz of Anhalt and 10 000 talers in ransom money.<sup>20A</sup>

The *Tabagerie* met almost every night. It was filled with aristocrats and old generals who all drank hard, smoked heavily, involved themselves in cruel horseplay and spoke crudely. Frederick I had founded it during a plague epidemic (possibly around 1707), when it was thought tobacco smoke would ward off fatal disease. Bad tempered and angry, the Great Crater as he was also called, Frederick William could erupt at anytime like a volcano. But why not? He was a King who had absolute power, and neither his parents nor anything else had ever made him behave reasonably, nor had forced him to curtail his bad temper. He often used violence to force people to cower to his will and to get absolute obedience. Not only did he threaten his Queen at least once with imprisonment and at least once with death, he also beat his children in public just to humiliate them. (The King's brutal handling of his two eldest children is detailed later in this chapter.) In the late 1720s Princess Wilhelmine wrote that her father called her nothing else but the English *canaille* (I guess that means a slut, or a dog) and that he treated her and her brother in a shocking manner.

In 1735 Frederick William ordered that forced burglary and small house thefts to the value of more than three talers be punished by a death sentence. Offenders were hanged for a day on a gallows in front of the house where they had committed the crime as a deterrent to others not to stray outside the law. Sadly this edict led to many judicial murders. Frederick William could be decribed as hard-working, heavy-drinking and smoking, pious, gluttonous, and a bully with a disgusting temper who terrorized his vassals. If one of his public servants wrote a report that displeased him he often drew a picture of a gallows on the document. Frederick William changed his clothes many times each day and constantly washed his hands. He lived a Spartan life, even wearing protective garments to save his simple clothing from wear. In his private rooms at his Wusterhausen hunting lodge everything was made out of wood; there were neither carpets nor upholstered furniture. Even as a young man he had preferred its wooden benches to his mother's tizzy, silk-laden rooms. Though miserly by nature, at times he was incredibly generous to his favourites at Court, like Grumbkow and the Duke of Anhalt. But where it concerned his army no expense was ever too high!

Though fit and strong early on in his life, the older Frederick William became the more his health and his mind deteriorated. Even when quite young he suffered severe attacks of colic and gout, and later on he developed asthma. He eventually got so fat that three soldiers

were needed to help him mount his horse! His violent, barely controllable rages were followed by long periods of depression and guilt. In 1729 Frederick William suffered a severe fit of temporary (perhaps more like permanent!) insanity from which it was believed he would not recover. In 1734 a fearful attack of dropsy blew his waistline out to sixty-one inches (1.52 metres); his lungs filled with fluid. Daily, two litres of nauseating, red fluid were drained from his legs. That he survived another six years seems somewhat of a miracle.

Frederick William was also a religious despot who adopted the narrow intolerant spirit shown by the Halle pietist clergy. During one period of his reign the evening mealtime conversation at his table was dominated by a clergyman who insisted that only religious matters should be discussed. In short, all pleasure was considered a sin against God. It is highly likely each of the King's daughters were strictly schooled in religion. When she was fifteen years old Princess Wilhelmine, the eldest of his six daughters, was subjected to a three hour examination of her religious knowledge. During the test, organized like a ceremony of State, Wilhelmine wrote eighteen closely-printed pages as the Court chaplain Andrea stood over her.<sup>5</sup>

Though the Hohenzollern family and the great majority of their subjects were Protestant, the ruling family followed the austere beliefs of Jean Calvin, while most of their subjects followed those of Martin Luther. The Great Elector and his successors oversaw a State in which religious toleration blossomed. In the last two decades of the seventeenth century some 20 000 French Huguenots, driven out of France by Louis XIV after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, settled in Brandenburg-Prussia. The Huguenots, mostly highly skilled, hard working people, were to have a lasting influence on the intellectual and economic life of Berlin. During Frederick William's reign tens of thousands of religious refugees were actively encouraged to settle in many of the monarchy's wasteland areas, which they through their sustained hard work were turned into arable land. In 1732, at his invitation, 15 500 Salzburgers and the first 500 Bohemian religious refugees arrived in Berlin. While the Bohemians stayed in Berlin, most of the Salzburgers chose to settle in distant Prussia.

Frederick William, driven by a pathological hatred of idleness, used to belt any idle subjects who came to his attention with a cane. Being a workaholic his long workday began at 5am. Somewhat foolishly he got over involved in the day to day running of his kingdom. But without doubt he kept his army officers and Government officials alert by making quick trips over very rough roads to his distant possessions in an attempt to catch them off guard. Being a person who in the main despised esoteric studies and science, Frederick William enjoyed humiliating the scholarly members of the Academy of Sciences. In marked contrast Crown Prince Frederick adored learned thought and study. Such diametrically opposed views of life in part help explain some of the fury the King directed at Frederick. It has often been reported that Frederick William had an enormous aversion to everything creative. But this view seems not to be entirely true when one considers the magnificent full length oil portrait he painted of one of his beloved tall soldiers.

On 31 May 1740, after many years of serious physical and mental illness, the mighty

Soldier King closed his eyes for the last time. For at least six months after his death his Queen's chambers were blacked out and she and her Court remained in mourning. Baron von Bielfeld, who both viewed the King's body as it lay in State and went to his funeral, left for posterity a fascinating account of what he had seen. At the Potsdam palace the front rooms were blacked out and illuminated by burning wax candles which sat in silver sconces (wall brackets). The dead King lay in a room bedecked in violet coloured velvet and adorned with gold-plated chandeliers. Raised up in the middle was the coffin, covered with violet coloured velvet lined with gold-braid. A rapier, gloves, a *Ringkragen* (a neck protector, later on a half moon or heart-shaped silver shield worn on the chest by an officer) and spurs lay upon it, while wax candles on *guéridons* (small, round, ornately carved ornamental tables or stands) surrounded it. Between the *guéridons* were magnificent tabourets on which the crown, sceptre, imperial orb and sword lay, everything of pure gold and richly studded with diamonds. Next to each tabouret stood a State Minister or a lieutenant general, and behind the coffin Field Marshal von Schwerin holding the realm's flag. The canopy over the coffin was lined with silver which was embossed with the Prussian coat of arms. Everywhere splendour and good taste prevailed.<sup>6</sup>

At the funeral the whole garrison (of perhaps 12 000 men) stood in two rows from the palace gate to the church gates. The procession began at 12pm led by soldiers from his Royal Highness' regiment. Then came the monarch's household servants in deep mourning: the stablehands, coachmen, huntsmen, servants and pages... All the senior officials, State Ministers and generals were followed by their liveried servants. The whole scene was resplendent. Then came the hearse pulled by eight horses bedecked in black. The coffin wasn't covered. Field Marshal von Schwerin came next with the colours, led by two generals. Next followed the King, the Prince of Anhalt-Dessau, and five hundred aristocratic general staff officers dressed in magnificent uniforms and marching in step. Finally came the dead King's other sons, the Princes' William, Henry and Ferdinand.<sup>6</sup>

So what was Frederick William's legacy? He installed into his Government officials a devotion to duty, hard work, punctuality and honesty. He broke the power of the aristocracy and made them serve the State by doing army service. He instilled, perhaps better said, belted the work ethic into each and everyone of his vassals. He encouraged political refugees to settle his domains, and his funds combined with their industry, especially in Prussia, rapidly improved the amount of arable land and the number of towns. Not only did Frederick William build his army to be the fourth largest force in Europe, but he also made it into the most disciplined. He also left behind 8 700 000 talers, not including gold and silver furnishings and fittings, in his overflowing war chest. Less than seven months after his death his son Frederick used his war ready army to attack and claim the rich Austrian province of Silesia. Among other private legacies, Frederick William left 30 000 reichstalers in his will to each of his daughters.

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### ***Sophie Dorothea***

Princess Sophie Dorothea of Hanover married her first cousin Frederick William, the Crown Prince of Prussia, in November 1706. Amazingly she bore him fourteen children, though only ten survived infancy, including Frederick II (the Great) of Prussia and Princess Anna Amalie. Sophie Dorothea, like Frederick William, was a direct descendant of Mary Queen of Scots and Mary's son James VI of Scotland, who became James I of England. Her father was George Ludwig, the Elector of Hanover, who later ascended the British throne as George I, while her mother who was also called Sophie Dorothea remained the uncrowned Queen of England. Sophie's brother George August succeeded his father as George II. Also through Sophie's veins, and Frederick William's, flowed the blood of the Guelphs, one of the two great dynasties which founded the Holy Roman Empire. Leibnitz, the great German intellectual who worked for the House of Hanover, supposedly discovered a link between the Houses of Guelph and d'Este which dated back to the twelfth century. The link was the marriage between the great Guelph Prince Henry the Lion and his wife Mathilda, a daughter of Henry II of England.<sup>2</sup>

The heart wrenching and tragic life of Sophie's mother, the 'Princess of Ahlden' is told in Book I. Sophie was just seven when her mother, the daughter of possibly the richest Prince in Germany, was accused of adultery and banished for life to the castle of Ahlden. The avaricious in-laws then systematically and successfully set about stealing all her and her family's enormous wealth. But even then they were not satisfied! To further persecute Sophie's mother, she was never again allowed to see her two children. The separation from her mother at such an early age led to Sophie's early upbringing being casual and her schooling shallow. Sophie's trousseau was made in Paris under her aunt Liselotte's watchful supervision. When it was finished it was set up on view in one of the halls at Versailles. Even Louis XIV admired the magnificent workmanship. When she first arrived in Berlin Sophie clearly saw her father-in-law Frederick I's quasi-French Court was far inferior to the culture and opulence at Hanover.

Frederick William believed women had to be kept under control, otherwise they were capable of leading men a merry dance.<sup>1B</sup> He had a poor opinion of women; he simply didn't trust them, and that included his wife Sophie. In her twenties Sophie looked almost breathtaking with her blond hair, hourglass figure and ample bust. Her stunning figure, combined with a Court full of handsome young courtiers, only fed her husband's jealous suspicion. In the early years of their marriage Frederick William behaved so badly that Sophie was barely able ask a question of or talk to another male without him lashing out with some nasty comment or worse. At times he tortured her with his jealous outbursts; she often found herself trying to pacify his volatility. Because of Frederick William's excessively domineering nature, Sophie was forced to do things behind his back. And frequently she did quite the opposite of what he wanted.

When in Berlin Sophie lived at Monbijou Palace on the banks of the Spree River (opposite the present site of the Pergamon Museum), where she fashioned her Court after

the grand French-style Courts of her forebears. Her children spoke French as their first language, and indeed only learnt to speak German badly. By way of stark contrast their father King Frederick William, always the soldier, spoke and wrote in a rough, vulgar German dialect. He had grown up to loath his father's mock-French lifestyle. The starkly conflicting lifestyles and attitudes of their parents confused the children, and became a major cause of the open strife that simmered between the King and his children. Sophie became noted for her moodiness, indiscretion, inconsistency and lack of self-control. Though she sometimes encouraged her children to do forbidden things behind their father's back, when it suited her she reported their indiscretions to him.

The money spent by Queen Sophie and her children was always closely scrutinized by Frederick William. Five years after becoming Queen the purse strings had been pulled so tight on Sophie that she only had two poor-quality carriages and six old horses at her disposal. Budgets were drawn up every year. And everyone was expected to live within their means! Each winter the King gave his wife a dress to suit the season, and at Christmas he gave her expensive jewellery or other precious objects. His one real concession to extravagance—except of course the money he splurged on his beloved army—was to adorn the rooms of State and the Queen's rooms with solid silver chandeliers, table services, sconces, candlestick holders, tables, and mirror and picture surrounds. But of course in an emergency all the silver could be melted down!

Sophie Dorothea had a passion for games. She often played all day long, and for high stakes with her Court ladies. Occasionally she gave banquets and masquerades at Monbijou. But such displays of extravagance were done without her husband's approval. Princess Wilhelmine says her mother Sophie was not only jealous and suspicious but she never forgave anyone whom she thought had slighted her. She exuded the pride and arrogance of her Hanoverian forebears; her ambition was without limits. Wilhelmine did not paint a pretty picture of her mother (who I believe had little compassion, time nor love for her children). After Sophie's father became King George I of Great Britain in 1714 she transferred her loyalty to the British Court. Frederick William, as has been previously explained, was swayed to favour Austria and the Holy Roman Emperor. These conflicting loyalties almost led to the death of their eldest son Frederick at the hands of his father. Further conflict was stirred up between Frederick William and Sophie by the Prince of Anhalt, who was bitter because his own niece had not married the monarch.

In the early 1740s, after Sophie's son Frederick had ascended the throne and loosened the purse strings on the Royal Family, two more wings were added onto the Monbijou Palace. This elevated the Queen Mother's residence to the status of the 'Versailles' of Berlin. In the great Orange Room, just behind the palace's magnificent main entrance, grand balls and music recitals enriched the cultural life of the aristocrats of Berlin. Prussian and foreign diplomats and other guests of high rank and fame met in the palace's drawing-room. In the warmer months festivities moved outdoors into the magnificently sculptured gardens. Stunning fireworks displays lit up the night sky above the garden parties, as boats drifted

along on the Spree River. Like Frederick William, as she aged Sophie's body grew to massive proportions. Even so she survived him by some seventeen years before the clanging of church bells in Berlin and throughout the entire monarchy announced her passing on 28 June 1757, just ten days after her son Frederick had suffered a disastrous defeat at the hands of the great Austrian Field Marshal Daun at Kolin.

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### ***The Failed Double Marriage Project With England***

Throughout the 1720s constant negotiations took place between the Courts at Berlin and London, the talking point being a double marriage between Crown Prince Frederick and his sister Wilhelmine, with the English Princess Amelia and her brother Frederick, the later Prince of Wales. Queen Sophie desperately wanted her daughter Wilhelmine to become the English Queen. After all her mother was its uncrowned Queen! And with this in mind she dangerously threw herself into the political snake-pit. Around 1729 the British Court charged the politically inept Sir Charles Hotham with bringing the double marriage project to a successful conclusion, and thus uniting Britain with Brandenburg-Prussia. The Austrian envoy to Berlin, Seckendorff, bribed Frederick William's Chief Minister Grumbkow and many others in order to ensure the King rejected the English double marriage. Even Reichenbach, the Prussian Resident Secretary in London, was being bribed to work for the Austrians. His false reports badly distorted the King's view of the English Court, while his gossip in London further soured the bilateral relationship between London and Berlin.

The marriage project was already faltering when Hotham got his hands on an intercepted letter between Grumbkow and Reichenbach that proved their treachery. But he clumsily bungled the handing over of the evidence to the King, who then rejected the accusations raised against his favourite Grumbkow. Hotham left Berlin in a huff, the marriage project was abandoned and Prussia remained aligned with Austria. Grumbkow and Seckendorff then tried to 'make Prussia Catholic again' by attempting to arrange a marriage between Crown Prince Frederick and Maria Theresia of Austria. As history records this attempt also failed. However a question must be asked. Did some of Frederick's anger which he threw at Austria in the two Silesian Wars and in the Seven Years' War have its origins in the forementioned events?

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### ***Crown Prince Frederick's Failed Escape Bids***

In January 1730 Crown Prince Frederick was so cruelly beaten by his father Frederick William that over the next few months he made three somewhat pathetic, and certainly desperately underfunded, failed attempts to escape from Brandenburg-Prussia. On one occasion his father bashed him in public. Then as he was dragged along the ground by his hair, he was further belittled by a terrifying tirade of abuse. In fact the King's treatment of his son was so fierce that people suspected he wanted him dead! Frederick's final escape bid, which also



failed dismally, took place on 05 August while he was accompanying his father on an inspection trip to two of his distant possessions in south-west Germany, Ansbach and the Rhine territories. Several days later the King convened a formal hearing at Wesel. Frederick point-blank refused to co-operate, as this would have betrayed his accomplices and put their lives in danger. Finally, quick-tempered Frederick William drew his sword and would probably have killed his son had the commander of Wesel not intervened to save the Crown Prince's life.

Supposedly Frederick had attempted to escape to England so he could marry the English Princess Amelia. However his father believed it to be a sinister plot against him. He believed the Queen, and especially Princess Wilhelmine were also involved, which they were. Fortunately he found no evidence which could implicate them, as they had been pre-warned and had destroyed it. A military court-martial defied the King, refusing to try Frederick. It also refused to change the life sentence imposed on his accomplice, and possible lover, Lieutenant von Katte. Nevertheless, at the King's command Frederick was forced to watch von Katte's execution by beheading. He was then imprisoned in the Küstrin fortress—as his life hung by a thread—and incessantly harassed and interrogated. It was not until several months later that he was released 'on parole.' In August 1731 Frederick met with his father and finally admitted he had attempted to escape to England. The King had brought the Crown Prince to his knees, and had he not cowered to his father's will he could have lost his life. Frederick remained on parole in Küstrin until early 1732.

Frederick and Wilhelmine had always been close, united by the joint suffering they had experienced at the hands of their brutal father. Frederick William knew Wilhelmine had been involved in Frederick's escape bid. After flying into a rage he hurled obscenities at her and followed this up by smashing his fist into her face a few times. He then placed her under arrest! The English *chargé d'affaires*, Guy Dickens, says for the next few days the King went into the Princess' room where he cursed her and beat her around the head and body. His angry, screaming words and the Princess' fearful moans penetrated through the palace walls, leaving the whole Court in deep shock. For many months Wilhelmine was kept under house arrest in her rooms. Guards kept watch outside her doors, and an officer checked security eight times every day.

Why was Frederick William so severe in punishing his two eldest children? He believed he and his family had to set the example. At its very core, his severe military State was dependent on discipline and duty to stay intact. Every officer and soldier, irrespective of who they were, had to conform! If Frederick had got away with shirking his duty the whole rigid system could have been dealt a heavy blow.

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### ***The King Forces Wilhelmine to Marry***

Frederick William's rage directed against his eldest daughter Princess Wilhelmine had built up rapidly in the months preceding Frederick's failed escape bid in August 1730. In January

of that year he had told her she must either marry the old Duke of Weissenfels or the Margrave of Schwedt. But the Princess and her mother Queen Sophie resisted his demands, for they still dreamed about the double marriage with the English Royals. In early 1731, in what appeared to be the celebration of the forthcoming marriage of his twelve-year-old daughter Sophie with Frederick of Bayreuth, Frederick William sent out invitations to the surrounding nobility. By May the King had had enough. He gave Wilhelmine an ultimatum. If she consented to marry the Prince, then Crown Prince Frederick would be freed from Küstrin. If she refused she would find herself imprisoned in Memel in distant Lithuania and her servants would be severely dealt with.

Wilhelmine married on 20 November 1731 in the Berlin Palace. Her silvery dress, made of *Silberstoff* (a silvery material) was interwoven with gold *Poin d'Espagne*. Her hair, together with the false locks that were added to it, was combed forward so it hung down around her pretty face. The priceless crown she wore was so heavy she was barely able to keep her head upright. Several hundred aristocratic blue-bloods assembled in the Knight's Room at 4pm to witness the ceremony celebrated by the Court preacher Noltenius. The bridal procession through the enormous, magnificently furnished room began just before 5pm. Wilhelmine's six metre long train was carried by her sisters' Ulrike and Amalie and two other attendants. When the service was over three deafening salvos from three dozen cannons roared out into the skies over Berlin.<sup>7</sup>

The richly decorated banquet tables were crammed full of guests. Though the smoke and soot from the torches which lit up the rooms blackened both clothes and faces, through the flickering torchlight one could see all the King's precious, glittering table silverware, silver-edged mirrors and huge, imposing chandeliers. The traditional torch-dance where the bride and groom, together with all the Princes and Princesses and State Ministers, strode through the hall to the sounds of blaring trumpets and drums was the highlight of the evening. Two days later the celebrations continued when 700 couples attended a ball held in the Great Hall of the Berlin Palace. As tradition dictated, over the next two weeks in the evening, fireworks displays, operas and plays entertained the guests. The King gave his daughter a silver service for more than forty people. He also loaned his son-in-law's father, the Margrave of Bayreuth, 260 000 talers interest free, which had to be repaid at the rate of 25 000 talers yearly. Wilhelmine's dowry was the usual 40 000 talers, to which a further 60 000 talers was added to compensate her for her renunciation of her mother's inheritance.

In May 1735 Wilhelmine's husband Frederick succeeded his father as the Margrave of Bayreuth. In August he gave his wife some magnificent jewels, a yearly bonus and the Eremitage Palace. The flighty Frederick constantly got himself into severe financial strife, so much so that in the late 1730s Frederick William sent the Berlin finance expert Hartmann there to help try and sort out the mess. When she moved to Bayreuth in late 1731 Wilhelmine had taken her best friend Wilhelmine, the daughter of General von der Marwitz, with her as her stewardess. Almost a decade later they became bitter enemies after Wilhelmine found out her first lady at Court was having an affair with her husband. Shortly after the Margrave's



lover became his official mistress, even though she was a married woman. After Wilhelmine visited Berlin in late 1747 her brother King Frederick confiscated the Prussian fortune of Wilhelmine's former best friend. This lever was then successfully used to force her and her spouse to leave Bayreuth. The 1740s had been a humiliating, heartbreaking time for Wilhelmine, the sister of the Prussian King.

Wilhelmine and her husband were not loved by their vassals. And when the State Palace caught fire in January 1753 their subjects just stood by contentedly and watched as it burned down. Somehow a reconciliation must have taken place between Wilhelmine and her husband Frederick, for in October 1754 they went on a nine-month trip together through France and Italy. In February 1744 when just eleven years old, Wilhelmine's daughter Friederike became engaged to the sixteen-year-old Duke Karl Eugene von Württemberg. However the marriage, which was shaky from its beginning, did not take place until the child bride had turned sixteen. A decade or so later Friederike separated from her spouse. She died when just forty-seven, two years less than her mother's life had run. Sadly both mother and daughter had travelled down the same road of unhappiness. After Wilhelmine died in October 1758 her forty-seven-year-old widower Frederick married the twenty-one-year-old Sophie Caroline of Brunswick-Bevern, the daughter of Wilhelmine's sister Charlotte. The childless marriage was cut short when the Margrave died in 1763.

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### ***Crown Prince Frederick's Love Life***

In the several years leading up to Frederick's failed escape bids in 1730 much was happening behind the scenes. Though love affairs and scandals at Court were always severely suppressed, and if found out punished by Frederick William, even a brutal King could not entirely control the sexual urges of his children. In early 1728 Crown Prince Frederick visited Dresden with his father, and while there he had an affair with a Countess Anna von Orzelska. Soon after the Countess, according to Princess Wilhelmine, secretly visited Frederick in Berlin. Rumours have flown around ever since that Frederick got a severe dose of a venereal disease from her, which had lasting consequences for him.

Frederick first noticed Doris Ritter, the beautiful daughter of Mathias Ritter, the principal of the great school in Potsdam and the Nikolai Church choirmaster, when he saw her singing solo in the church choir. People began to notice when the Crown Prince made the greatest effort to hear her sing and to speak to her, and it was generally believed he was in love with her. Princess Wilhelmine mentions Doris as one of her brother's lovers. And indeed it seems to have been an open secret that Frederick had affairs with women who made themselves available. After Frederick's failed escape bid in August 1730 Frederick William severely punished all his son's friends and accomplices. On 05 September Doris Ritter was arrested, whipped and imprisoned in the Spandau spinning-house—a gaol for women. The King's hand-written note read 'that the local choirmaster's daughter who is hereby sent shall for ever remain in the spinning-house. Doris' name also was mentioned in the court-martial

judgement given against Lieutenant von Ingersleben in October. Apparently he had taken her a gift from the Crown Prince, a blue dressing-gown. Doris' father was dismissed from his job. She was not released from gaol until 1733. After moving to Berlin she married and had four children. Doris lived in poverty. Her former lover did virtually nothing to help her out of her straightened circumstances, apart from granting her husband a miserable taxi cab licence in 1744.

Frederick was released from gaol in Küstrin in late 1730, though he remained there on parole until early 1732. In August 1731 the nineteen-year-old Crown Prince began an affair with the beautiful, intelligent Louisa Eleanore von Wreech, the granddaughter of the Brandenburg Field Marshal von Schöning. Louisa lived at Tamsel Castle, which her grandfather had magnificently decorated in the style of Louis XIV. Though just twenty-one years old, she had already been married for seven years. Her husband Colonel Adam Frederick von Wreech rose to become a general before his death in 1746. Louisa bore Frederick's child, a daughter, who when she grew up married Count Gerhard von Dönhoff.<sup>9</sup> When Frederick left Küstrin he sent Louisa his miniature portrait, a passionate poem and a farewell letter, dated 10 February 1732. Many years later Louisa attempted to have one of her daughter's (probably Frederick's child) made a lady-in-waiting to the Queen. The ungenerous Frederick did not support the request. In an undated letter he wrote: 'Frau von Wreech makes so much trouble, she cannot take it badly if preference is given to the young Schwerin (over her daughter).'<sup>8</sup> On 25 August 1758 Frederick fought a battle at Zorndorff against the invading Russians who had overrun the New Mark, set fire to Küstrin and pillaged Luisa's town of Tamsel. Though Frederick wrote several letters to Louisa, who had lost almost everything, he did little to help her out of her desperate plight. Louisa died six years later.

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### ***The King Forces Crown Prince Frederick to Marry***

Just before Frederick left Küstrin he received a letter from his father Frederick William in which he was told about his future wife, a letter which began: 'You know that if my children are obedient, I am very loving to you.' And so it was with the King. Either his children showed him absolute subservience or he severely punished them! In spring of the previous year Frederick had written a prophetic statement: 'When the King asserts that I must marry I will listen. After that I will walk out on my wife and live my way.'<sup>8A</sup> After years of torment Frederick had been brought to his knees by his father. He saw marriage to a woman of his father's choosing as the ONLY way of regaining the freedom he had forfeited by attempting to flee the kingdom.

Within weeks of leaving Küstrin he met and became engaged to Elisabeth Christine (born in Wolfenbüttel on 08 November 1715, between 7 and 8am) of Brunswick-Bevern, the niece of the Empress Elisabeth of Austria, the wife of the last Habsburg Emperor Karl VI. Though Elisabeth Christine was quite lovely, she was also inhibited, reserved, unsure of

herself. Frederick gave his first impression: 'She is pretty, has a glowing complexion and fine features, so that her face would be called beautiful. But her education is lacking, and so she clothes herself badly.'<sup>10</sup> Frederick was married on 12 June 1733 in the Salzdalum Palace in Wolfenbüttel. The Princess' family was not rich, so only a miserable dowry of 25 000 talers was handed over. Within a few weeks Frederick returned to his regiment at Neuruppin. His bride moved into the Crown Prince's Palace in Berlin.

In October Frederick William gave Frederick the Rheinsberg Palace, but the couple did not move in there until August 1736. Frederick William's First Minister Grumbkow and the Austrian envoy Seckendorff had won the day with the Crown Prince marrying a Habsburg relative. The Austrian Government was so delighted they later paid Grumbkow 40 000 gulden for his efforts.

When Baron Bielfeld visited Rheinsberg in 1738 Elisabeth Christine made a stunning impact on him: 'I have never seen a better proportioned waistline. A painter could use her bust, hands and feet as a model. Her hair, which I especially noted, is the most beautiful ash-grey hair in the world. She has a very soft complexion, and large, blue fiery eyes, showing both a lively and gentle nature. She has a small, slightly pointed nose, a pleasant mouth, red lips, a charming chin and neck.'<sup>11</sup>

Much historical confusion surrounds the married couple's love-life, as to whether they ever actually lived together as man and wife. Apart from the couple themselves, only the fly on the wall really knows what happened between them. Not long after he ascended the throne on 31 May 1740 Frederick separated from his wife forever. They had lived together under the same roof for barely four years. But was the marriage ever consummated? The estranged Queen Elisabeth Christine later said she had only 'through fate had no children.'<sup>11A</sup> From the time of their separation the King and Queen lived completely separate lives and rarely ever saw one another. Though the Queen was never allowed to visit his Sanssouci Palace in Potsdam, Frederick showed no great animosity towards her. He ensured both nobles and diplomats alike paid her the respect her rank demanded. One time during the Seven Years' War he even sent her a porcelain service.

Countess Reede-Ghinkel, the daughter of Princess Friederike's stewardess, says because the King held strongly with etiquette: 'her Majesty always travelled with eight horses' and 'always with pages at the carriage doors. One could not see in the domestic staff, the livery, the furnishings, the lighting, and way of life anything cheap.'<sup>8</sup> The year they separated Frederick gave Elisabeth Christine the summer palace of Schönhausen, some ten kilometres from the city centre. Most of the year the Queen lived in the Berlin Palace, where each Sunday and Thursday she held Court. During the warmer months, between May and September, she lived at Schönhausen. There, Court was held on Wednesday afternoons. At 5pm the invited guests made their way from Berlin along the deep sandy track, often through blinding dust storms which plagued the region, to meet their Queen. Male guests always wore either an embroidered Court suit or a uniform, always with white silk stockings and shoes. The ladies wore a *Volante* which, separate from the dress, hung down from the

shoulders in wide folds and fell a forearm's length onto the floor. The pannier-style dresses had frames used to distend the skirt at the hips, or sometimes the material was hooped up at the hips. As was the fashion of the day, the ladies wore a small hat on their heads. Only the young women and girls went bare-headed, their powdered hair magnificently made up with flowers and feathers.

Though Elisabeth Christine never openly criticized her husband Frederick, the letters she wrote to her brother Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick show she was deeply wounded at not being invited to gatherings of the Royal Family.

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### ***The Other Hohenzollern Siblings***

#### **Friederike**

In May 1729 the angelic-looking fourteen-year-old Princess Friederike married Karl, the seventeen-year-old Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach. The wedding festivities, which were held in Berlin, went on for 10 days and were attended by some 300 guests. Karl had an all consuming obsession, falconry. Quite amazingly up to forty-one of his servants were preoccupied in caring for his ravenous birds. Even his bedroom overflowed with the trappings of his obsession. Karl turned out not only to be a heavy drinker, but he was also a womanizer. His marriage to Friederike was a disaster. She became known as 'the foolish wife of the fool from Ansbach.' Wilhelmine says the Margrave 'was a badly brought up young Prince, who fought with my sister like a cat and dog, and incessantly ill-treated her.'

Though Friederike's sister Charlotte pleaded with her father Frederick William that he stand by his melancholy child, nothing changed. Finally Friederike yielded and accepted her husband's current mistress Elisabeth Wunsch, and no longer argued in public about it. Like many eighteenth century Princesses she had no choice. Her husband was a womanizer and she had to accept it. In mid-1740 the newly crowned King Frederick sent one of his senior officials, named Klinggräf, to Ansbach in an attempt to try and mediate a peace between the warring couple. But the mission failed when the Margrave took off to one of his hunting lodges. Though Frederick himself visited Ansbach in October, Wilhelmine believed his sole reason for going was to get troops for his army which was to invade Silesia in December. Friederike's tragic marriage ended when she was widowed at the age of forty-three. She never remarried. Later on her mental health so broke down that she was insane for the last twenty-one years of her life. Friederike's parents Sophie Dorothea and Frederick William were first cousins. Inbreeding often reinforces both the strengths and weaknesses of one's forebears. It is said a fine line divides genius and insanity. While many consider her brother Frederick to have been a genius, unfortunately Friederike inherited the other side of the coin.

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**Charlotte**

Though in her teenage years Charlotte was known for her sarcasm and her inclination to mock others, as she matured she mellowed and became more constant. The many letters she sent her siblings brought much wit and joy into their lives. In her late teens Charlotte started taking painting lessons so she could learn to paint beautiful portraits just like her father Frederick William, who himself was an excellent artist. She married on 02 July 1733 when she was just seventeen years old. Within two years her husband became Duke Karl I of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. Like her mother Sophie Dorothea, the Duchess Charlotte had a large family. She bore thirteen children and suffered her share of grief through them—three died while still just babies, and only six of them outlived her.

Charlotte lost three of her soldier sons. In 1761 Albrecht Henry died from war wounds received in a battle near Ruhne. Ten years later William Adolf contracted a fever and died while fighting under Russian command in the campaign against the Turks in Bessarabia. Finally in 1785 Leopold drowned while on active service. Anna Amalie of Sachsen-Weimar, a composer of some significance, was perhaps Charlotte's most famous child. She founded the famous Weimar music circle which helped make the city into a centre of intellectual and artistic life in Germany. In April 1795 Anna's niece the Princess Caroline married the Prince of Wales. The marriage lasted barely a year. The Prince, a brutal man who later became George IV of England, followed his family's tradition for violence. His great-great-grandfather Ernest August, the Duke of Hanover, was the one who had sanctioned the murder of Philip Königsmark, the lover of his daughter-in-law, the 'Princess of Ahlden.' Another of Charlotte's children Elisabeth could have become the Queen of Prussia. Her tragic life is dealt with later in this chapter, under Frederick William II.

Like Brandenburg-Prussia, Brunswick was devastated during the Seven Years' War. Invading French armies extracted enormous contributions from its populace and from its Royal Family, and set fire to much of the dukedom. One time alone the Duke handed over 6000 sacks of grain and 45 000 talers in contributions. In 1758, after some twenty-five years of marriage, Charlotte's husband Karl took on two mistresses. Even Charlotte could not escape the trend among the German princes to keep mistresses. Though her husband's infidelity must have dented her pride she never mentioned anything about it in her letters to her siblings.

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**Sophie**

On 10 November 1734 the fifteen-year-old Princess Sophie married Frederick William, the Margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt, a man seventeen years her senior. Incredibly the Margrave squandered Sophie's impressive 100 000 taler dowry on building a magnificent stable complex to house his horses. Any other money he got his hands upon went into his favourite pastimes: hunting, he had over one hundred dogs; and whoring, he had a lot of mistresses too! The Margrave was a grandchild of the Great Elector and a nephew of one of

King Frederick William's closest friends, the Old Dessauer. Wilhelmine says he was cruel and brutal, with raw manners and low instincts. When he died he left behind thirty-six illegitimate children, the fruits of his numerous affairs. Lehndorff summed him up as a 'bad spouse, a worse father and a still worse ruler.'<sup>12A</sup> With time Sophie's marriage went from bad to worse. By 1755 a complete estrangement had occurred, with the Margrave living in the castle at Schwedt and Sophie in the small hunting castle of Monplaisir.

Sophie suffered from the Hohenzollern curse of dropsy; towards the end of her life she was so bloated she could neither move her arms nor her legs. Four months before she died in November 1765, her sisters Charlotte and Amalie visited her. Though Amalie took Dr Mutzelius along, it was all in vain. Sophie was just forty-six years of age and though one would believe she had suffered enough, as she lay on her death-bed her crazy husband inflicted upon her one final humiliation when he rode into and around her room on a horse. The tradition of inbreeding within the Hohenzollern family continued into the next generation when Sophie's daughter Anna Elisabeth married Sophie's youngest brother Prince Ferdinand.

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### **Ulrike**

As Princess Ulrike reached her late teens it was generally considered she would remain unwed. Consequently before his death in May 1740 her father Frederick William set aside a large sum of money to be used in the forthcoming 1743 election to secure Ulrike the position of coadjutress in the diocese of Quedlinburg. Though she took up the post in February of that year, she renounced it in mid-1744 so she could marry the Swedish Crown Prince. (For details of the marriage see Amalie's chapter in Book III.) In 1751 Ulrike became the Queen of Sweden when her husband Adolf Frederick ascended the throne. Because her father had always had absolute, uncontested power, Ulrike believed the Swedish King should also have absolute power. As time went by she began to openly fight with the Swedish senate and its politicians. Her rash, often ill considered actions added further fuel to a fire which had to explode.

On her marriage day Ulrike had been presented with what was to be known as the 'Berlin Jewels' by the Swedish special envoy, Count Tessin. Unlike her subjects, she considered them to be her own personal property. In 1756 she sent them to Berlin to be sold, so she could use the money so gained to restore the power of the Swedish monarchy. Somehow the Senate found out what she was up to and humiliated their Queen by forcing her to have the jewels returned to Sweden. Eight of Ulrike's supporters were publicly beheaded, and open discussions ensued as to what should be done with the insubordinate Queen. Should she be gaoled for life in Gripsholm Castle, or should her marriage be annulled and she be sent back to Berlin? Decisively, the Swedish Queen had been belittled and put back in her place.

Though Ulrike was unable to prevent Sweden from fighting against Brandenburg-Prussia in the Seven Years' War, the two monarchies never really fought more than a few minor



skirmishes against one another during that war. So perhaps the Berlin born Queen was effective in limiting the damage done to her homeland by the Swedish army? Ulrike's marriage seems to have been quite harmonious. Two of her sons became Kings. They ruled as Gustav III of Sweden, and as Karl XIII of Sweden who also became the King of Norway. Ulrike's daughter Sophie Albertine succeeded her aunt Princess Amalie as the Abbess of Quedlinburg. Ulrike's husband King Adolf Frederick died in February 1771. In December, accompanied by an entourage of eighty-two people, she visited Berlin for the first time in twenty-six years, and stayed there for nine months. In 1778 Ulrike again became involved in another very public scandal after she challenged the legitimacy of her son Gustav III's heir. Gustav then publicly humbled his mother by forcing her in the presence of six father confessors to sign a retraction of her claims. Like her mother Sophie Dorothea before her, Ulrike couldn't control her mouth. Though she appeared to have good health right up to the end of her life, Ulrike died in July 1782 when just sixty-two years old.

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### **August William**

At the tender age of eleven Prince August William was made a lieutenant in his father's beloved Potsdam tall guards, and from that time on had to do regular service. Being his father's favourite son he often went with him on his travels. As a direct consequence he picked up his father's coarse manners, and missed many lessons with his tutors which left large gaps in his education. While his younger brothers Henry and Ferdinand were short, August William was tall and good looking with blue eyes and brown hair. The Prince became a captain in a cuirassier regiment which carried his own name when he was twelve. He was a major by 1740 when the First Silesian War broke out, and within the next sixteen years he rose through the ranks to become a full general.

On 06 January 1742 August William married Queen Elisabeth Christine's sister, Louisa Amalie of Brunswick-Bevern. Four years later the unhappy union was mortally wounded when the Prince met and fell instantly in love with Sophie von Pannewitz. Sophie says the attachment was 'the greatest misfortune of his and my whole life.'<sup>8B</sup> In 1751 she says she married Count von Voss out of sense of duty and in consideration of the desperate condition of the Prince.<sup>13</sup> In June 1758 Queen Elisabeth Christine's chamberlain Lehndorff commented on the sorry state of the Prince's marriage, saying unsympathetically that his wife had little reason to be sad even though her husband had not always treated her well and had neglected her. They no longer ate together and at times did not speak with each other for several months at a time.<sup>12B</sup>

Tragedy struck August William in the weeks following the terrible defeat of the Brandenburg-Prussian army at Kolin on 18 June 1757 by the Austrian Field Marshal Daun. The Prince was placed in command of a dispirited army of 34 000 men, consisting of some fifty-two battalions and eighty squadrons, who now had serious doubts about their own courage. Though Frederick gave August William two advisors, the adjutant generals von

Winterfeldt and von Schmettau, he continued to ask Frederick's advice about every triviality that arose, just like a child would ask his mother. Poor advice, especially from von Schmettau, resulted in the Prince staying near Leipa as the vital Gabel Pass fell into enemy hands. After Winterfeldt fell sick he again sat immobilized, just seven kilometres from Zittau, as the Austrians burned down the town with the loss of provisions for 40 000 men. Against a superior enemy force August William continued to retreat. Frederick hammered him: 'If you always retreat within four weeks you will be driven back to Berlin.'<sup>20B</sup> When they finally met Frederick was in a terrifying mood and refused to talk to his brother.

August William resigned his command and retired to his Oranienburg Palace a bitter, broken man. The humiliating withdrawal of the gifted and popular young Prince, the next in line to the throne, threw him into a state of despair. Out of loyalty to August William Henry refused to take command of his brother's army. Sadly, within twelve months of his ignominious resignation from the army, and his subsequent withdrawal from public life, August William died on 12 June 1758. He was just thirty-five years old. The ruthless, but in the desperate circumstances, necessary way in which Frederick had handled him caused an unending bitterness to develop between the King and his brothers Henry and Ferdinand. August William's life was indeed tragic. For many years his heart had been torn to shreds through his unrequited love for Sophie von Pannewitz. Then finally his life's dream to command an army had ended in disgrace. Ironically, in August 1786 August William's son succeeded Frederick to the throne as Frederick William II of Prussia.

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## Henry

Prince Henry was the second youngest son of Frederick William and Sophie Dorothea. He was just twelve years old when in 1738 he was made a standard bearer in a grenadier regiment. Henry fought alongside Frederick in the Second Silesian War (1744-45) and rose to the rank of a full general by October 1758. After ascending the throne on 31 May 1740 as the King IN Prussia, Frederick asserted tight control over his younger brothers August William, Henry and Ferdinand, just as his father had done with him. Henry had many disastrous love affairs in his youth. Though he saw no reason to marry and sire a heap of useless princes, he finally yielded to his elder brother Frederick's demands when he saw this as the only way to get the freedom he so desperately wanted.

Henry married Wilhelmine of Hessen-Kassel in the Charlottenburg Palace in Berlin on 25 June 1752. The next evening a magnificent fireworks display turned the Berlin night sky into day. The following evening a huge pyramid, displaying the initials of the Queen Mother and the bridal couple illuminated the palace. The customary celebrations which surrounded Royal weddings—balls, banquets, plays and concerts—continued until 07 July when the Queen had the whole palace, its gardens and the surrounding alleyways illuminated with thousands of lamps.<sup>14</sup> Though the intelligent, beautiful and charming Wilhelmine soon became the favourite of the Royal Courts, she made little impression on Henry. Just four



months after his marriage Lehndorff says he was having an affair with Countess Bentinck. This affair, and the many which followed it, reduced his marriage to a pathetic state. Although the married couple both lived in the Prince's magnificent Unter den Linden palace, they lived completely separate lives in separate wings of the palace, and neither ate nor spoke with one another. Asprey even says Henry was fond of pretty young men.<sup>15</sup>

In the early 1750s as he began to set up his own household in the Rheinsberg Palace, Henry asked Frederick that it be the equal of August William's household at Oranienburg. The Court was expected to include (with some of their yearly salaries in talers): a steward (400); an equerry (300); a secretary, four pages, two valets and fifteen lackeys; nine kitchen staff, including a chef (400), a silver cleaner and a washerwoman (both 40), three cellar staff (120, 48 and 24); twenty stall attendants and fifty horses. The yearly budget allowed 5400 talers for salaries and almost 7800 talers for fodder.<sup>16</sup>

Henry was not a pretty sight; he had a small build which was all out of proportion. His ugly face was not helped by a pair of large, hard-looking, cross-eyed blue eyes. Wraxall visited Berlin in the 1770s. He saw Henry as being naturally reserved and distant, but when occasion demanded it of him he could be friendly and articulate. In the Seven Years' War Frederick had always given him 'the most arduous undertakings' where consummate care and military skill were required. He displayed great courage during the battle of Prague. And at Freiberg he showed an ability 'which ranked him among the first commanders of the age.' While Frederick tended towards bold and offensive measures, Henry showed far more caution.<sup>17</sup>

After the Seven Years' War Frederick gave Henry a body guard of twenty-five hussars, an honour he shared with only one other man, Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick. He also rewarded him with the estates of Wegeleben and Westerburg, which had a combined yearly income of 10 000 talers, and built him a magnificent new palace in Unter den Linden (the site of the present Humboldt University). The palace was brilliantly finished off with exceptional furniture, shining parquet flooring and lavishly liveried servants. Many have suggested Henry had a pathological hatred for his brother Frederick. If indeed this was the case it is not hard to understand why. Frederick ruled as an autocrat. He had all the power and wealth. He was also ruthless, which of course he had to be. No one likes to beg for favours, and Henry was no exception to the rule.

That Henry was a great general can hardly be disputed. His not inconsiderable skills as a diplomat came to the fore in 1770 when he visited the Russian Czarina Catherine the Great in Petersburg. During this trip the idea of partitioning Poland took shape. Though he did not show his hosts what he felt, inside he fumed with anger at the enormous sums of money he had to hand out to bribe the various members of the Russian Court. Two years later the first Partition of Poland took place. Henry made a second trip to Russia in March 1776, accompanied by a magnificent retinue which included his bodyguard, all of which befitted his high station in life.

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### **Ferdinand**

Prince Ferdinand, the youngest of the Hohenzollern children of the Soldier King Frederick William I and Sophie Dorothea of Hanover, grew up to be a very skilful hunter. As his brothers had done before him he also went into the army. Ferdinand showed great courage and energy when he fought at Frederick's side against the Austrians. Some twelve months into the Seven Years' War he was promoted to a lieutenant general. After sleeping out for weeks on end in deep snow during the siege of Breslau he developed a heavy lung infection and was hospitalized; his health did not recover and in 1758 he was forced to withdraw from the war. It seems highly likely Ferdinand's hostility towards Frederick had strengthened his resolve to withdraw from the war in 1758, as both he and Henry held Frederick primarily responsible for August William's premature death. To a limited extent Ferdinand continued to serve in the army and was promoted to a general in 1767, though soon after poor health forced him to retire.

Ferdinand married his sister Sophie's daughter, Louisa of Brandenburg-Schwedt. Though their marriage in its own way was fortunate, Louisa had quite an odd personality. Ferdinand must have been torn apart by the premature deaths of his children. Only three of seven reached the age of twenty, and only two of them survived him. In autumn 1763 Ferdinand became the Master of the Johanniter Order to Sonnenburg with a yearly income of 30 000 talers. He lived near Berlin in the Friedrichsfelde Palace before moving into the Bellevue Palace in the Berlin *Tiergarten* (gardens), which he had built in the late 1780s.

Ferdinand's son Prince Ludwig Ferdinand, born on 18 November 1772, was not only an extremely competent composer and pianist but he also became famous as a soldier of great courage. He fought for his country in many battles against Napoleon's armies before he fell at Saalfeld, it is said that he sacrificed himself, on 10 October 1806.

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### **The Siblings' Tragic Marriages**

Child brides and grooms were not uncommon within Royal families in eighteenth-century Europe. The Hohenzollern Princesses were no exception with Friederike marrying at fourteen, Sophie at fifteen, Charlotte at seventeen, Wilhelmine at twenty-two, and Ulrike at twenty-four. Only Amalie remained unwed. The Princes married when they were a little older: August William was nineteen, Frederick twenty-one, Ferdinand twenty-five, and Henry twenty-six. Of the nine Hohenzollern siblings who did marry perhaps only Ferdinand and Ulrike had successful marriages. The marriages of Frederick, Henry, August William, Friederike and Sophie all, more or less split up, and indeed were tragic. The husbands of Friederike and Sophie, like Henry and August William, had many affairs as did Charlotte's and Wilhelmine's husbands. The unwed Amalie's tragic affair with Frederick von der Trenck has been fully researched. See Book III, especially Chapters II and III.

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**The Mental and Physical Health of Frederick William, Sophie Dorothea and their Children**

The physical, emotional and mental health of first cousins Sophie Dorothea and Frederick William and of most of their children was not good. That first cousins produce children who have serious physical and mental illnesses is shown when we look at the Hohenzollern children. Not only did Sophie Dorothea bring fourteen children into the world, but tragically four of the first eight born died in infancy: Frederick Ludwig when five months, Frederick William at eleven months, Charlotte Albertine at thirteen months and Ludwig Karl when twenty-seven months.

Frederick William himself had a lapse of temporary (more like permanent) insanity in 1729. Throughout the mid-1730s he suffered terribly from dropsy and had a massive apoplectic seizure—a stroke caused by a rupture or obstruction of an artery in the brain. How he survived the last decade of his life to reach fifty-one years of age seems quite miraculous. His mother Sophie Charlotte only reached her late thirties, while his sickly father Frederick I died in his mid-fifties. Somehow the sedentary Sophie Dorothea attained her seventieth year, though the older she got the fatter she became.

August William died when he was just thirty-five. Queen Elisabeth Christine reported to her brother Ferdinand that he died of a stroke which followed a high fever. Lehndorff says a post-mortem revealed a growth on his brain.<sup>18</sup> Sophie lived till her mid-forties. Like her father she also suffered terribly from dropsy. Towards the end of her life she became so bloated she was unable to move either her arms or her legs. Wilhelmine died when she was forty-nine. Lehndorff says she suffered poor health for more than the last decade of her life. Unbearable headaches and cramps plagued her. She remained bedridden for the last six months. Dropsy, the curse of the Hohenzollerns, swelled her legs, hands and face up with fluid. In the end a heavy, dry cough and a chest illness, probably tuberculosis which also killed her grandfather Frederick I, brought a close to her life. Friederike had one nervous breakdown after another and finally she lost her mind altogether. After more than two decades of insanity she died at the age of sixty-nine.

Amalie's poor health, which she bore with great courage for more than the last twenty years of her life, is detailed in her chapter in Book III. She somehow reached sixty-three before she expired. In 1762 Frederick's body was stricken with gout in his fingers, arms, toes, legs and hands, and at times he could neither walk nor write. For many years he was plagued with haemorrhoids and colic. In a three month period in 1775 he got a fever, his haemorrhoids played up and he suffered fourteen attacks of gout which affected his knees, hands, an elbow and shattered his nervous system. At that time both the Austrian and English envoys thought he would die.<sup>15</sup> In his last year Frederick suffered terribly from dropsy and asthma. He died in August 1786, aged seventy-four.

Although she died when just sixty-two years old, of what was probably a broken spirit caused by conflict within and around the Swedish Royal Family, Ulrike's health seemed to be reasonably sound. The same could probably be said of Henry who lived until he was seventy-six, although in March 1756 Lehndorff wrote he had a disposition which tended

towards melancholy, and feared he would finally withdraw from society.<sup>12C</sup> Charlotte must have been tough for she reached the great age of eighty-five! And though Ferdinand's health was ruined during the Seven Years' War his constitution was strong enough to sustain him for eighty-two years.

It seemed not enough that in November 1706 Frederick William of Brandenburg-Prussia had married his first cousin Sophie Dorothea of Hanover; their descendants continued the trend. In November 1734 their daughter Sophie married Frederick William, the Margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt. The Great Elector was Sophie's great grandfather and her husband's grandfather. In September 1755 their son Ferdinand married his sister Sophie's daughter, Louisa of Brandenburg-Schwedt. Then in July 1765 Charlotte's daughter Elisabeth married her brother August William's son, the later Frederick William II. No wonder some of the Royals ended up going insane!

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### **Frederick William II**

Like father, like son, goes the expression. And so it is when one compares Crown Prince August William's tragic love for Sophie von Pannewitz with his son Frederick William's tragic love-life. In 1765 Frederick William, the next in line to the Prussian throne, married Charlotte's daughter Elisabeth. Scarcely was the Prince married before he began jumping into bed with a string of mistresses, mostly actresses of dubious repute who got him heavily into debt. No problem of State arose until Elisabeth retaliated by taking on her own lovers. Then Frederick's brothers Henry and Ferdinand, the second and third in line to the throne respectively, told him they would not tolerate a bastard taking away their legitimate rights of succession. As a consequence a group of high Government officials, sworn to take their findings to the grave, investigated Elisabeth's indiscretions. Soon after, in April 1769, a hasty divorce was arranged to end the stormy, scandalous marriage.

The twenty-three-year-old Princess Elisabeth, who in other circumstances would have become the Queen of Prussia, was banished to Stettin in Pomerania where she more or less remained a State prisoner until after King Frederick's death in August 1786. (This reminds me of the 'Princess of Ahlden's banishment. See Book I for details.) Some ten years later under Frederick William III's rule she was eventually allowed more freedom. But in spite of it all Elisabeth's spirit was never broken and she outlived her detractors and persecutors by many decades. She eventually died on 18 February 1840, at the great age of ninety-three! Ironically Elisabeth was born on 9 November (1746), the same day of the year as her aunt Princess Amalie, whose tragic affair with Frederick von der Trenck is the main theme of this manuscript.

Prince Frederick William's second wife was Friederike Louisa of Hessen-Darmstadt. She was cold and hateful to her husband, and he in turn was not kind to her. Marwitz says she was an extremely odd person who saw ghosts and spirits. She slept by day and was awake by night. Her body was always so hot, that year-round she sat dressed in a shirt at an

open window. She grew old, ugly and crooked quickly. By the time she was forty she had to hold her head up with her hand. She was unpleasant and no one loved her.<sup>8</sup>

Though Frederick William was thrifty in his official household, he threw money away when it came to his own personal pleasures and passions. He spent a lot of time with his son born to his girlfriend Fräulein Spiess, the daughter of a Potsdam glove maker. In September (1780?) he wrote a letter to him with the inscription: 'To my son Alexander, Count von der Mark'<sup>11B</sup> After becoming King Frederick William II he gave Fräulein Spiess, who had married the King's first valet Herr Riess, the title of Countess Lichtenau. And they say spiders weave tangled webs?

Around 1783 the frisky Frederick William began to frequently visit Queen Elisabeth Christine's Schönhausen Palace. And why you may ask? He had fallen deeply in love with Julie von Voss, the Queen's seventeen-year-old lady-in-waiting. Somehow Julie kept her suitor at bay for a long while, but finally yielded to him sometime after he ascended the throne as Frederick William II in August 1786, on the condition that he no longer saw his former lover. Though the new King had a small house built for Julie near Sanssouci and put her in it, he continued to see Frau Riess. Julie must have served her King well for he made her the Countess von Ingenheim. In January 1789 she bore the King a son. At this time the King was ill and unwisely Julie left her lying-in bed too quickly to be by his side. Sadly she caught a cold from which she did not recover. By March she was dead. Frederick William wept for her for twelve months before a newly appointed lady-in-waiting called Countess Sophie von Dönhoff took her place in his bed.<sup>11B</sup> In stark contrast to his namesake Frederick William I and his predecessor Frederick the Great, Frederick William II was a weak, lethargic and insignificant ruler who spent his time chasing about after his many mistresses. The business of Government he left to his favorites. He died on 16 November 1797 when still in his early fifties just as his grandfather of the same name had done before him.

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**FREDERICK WILLIAM AND SOPHIE DOROTHEA'S CHILDREN  
BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES<sup>19</sup>**

1. FREDERICK LUDWIG  
b. 23.11.1707 d. 13.05.1708
2. SOPHIE FRIEDERIKE **WILHELMINE**  
b. 03.07.1709 d. 14.10.1758  
m. Frederick William of Brandenburg-Bayreuth
3. FREDERICK WILLIAM  
b. 16.08.1710 d. 31.07.1711
4. **FREDERICK II**, 'the Great'  
Born Prince of Prussia & Orange  
King IN Prussia, 31.05.1740  
Sovereign & Duke of Silesia, 31.12.1742  
King of Prussia, 13.09.1772  
b. 24.01.1712 at 11.30am d. 17.08.1786  
m. Elisabeth Christine of Brunswick-Bevern
5. CHARLOTTE ALBERTINE  
b. 05.05.1713 d. 10.06.1714
6. **FRIEDERIKE LOUISA**  
b. 28.09.1714 d. 04.02.1784  
m. Karl Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach
7. **PHILIPPINE CHARLOTTE**  
b. 13.03.1716 d. 16.02.1801  
m. Karl Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg
8. LUDWIG KARL WILLIAM  
b. 02.05.1717 d. 31.08.1719
9. **SOPHIE DOROTHEA MARIE**  
b. 25.01.1719 d. 13.11.1765  
m. Frederick William, Margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt
10. LOUISA **ULRIKE**  
b. 24.07.1720 between 4-5pm d. 16.07.1782  
m. Adolph Frederick, Prince of Holstein-Gottorp, later the King of Sweden
11. **AUGUST WILLIAM**  
b. 09.08.1722 between 5-6am d. 12.06.1758  
m. Louisa Amalie of Brunswick-Bevern  
Father of Frederick William II of Prussia.

12. ANNA **AMALIE**

b. 09.11.1723 around 12.30am d. 30.03.1787

Abbess of Quedlinburg, Margravine of Brandenburg, etc

13. FREDERICK **HENRY LUDWIG**

b. 18.01.1726 d. 03.08.1802

m. Wilhelmine of Hessen-Kassel

14. AUGUST **FERDINAND**

b. 23.05.1730 d. 02.05.1813

m. Anna Elisabeth Louisa of Brandenburg-Schwedt

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## HOUSE OF HOHENZOLLERN, RULERS OF BRANDENBURG-PRUSSIA

1. Aretz, *Die Frauen*. A= p18, B = p62.
2. Kroll, *Sophie*. p174, p226.
3. Bauer, *Berlin Illustrierte*. p152.
4. Mitchell, *Memoirs*. p96-99.
5. Cuthell, *Wilhelmine*.
6. Bielfeld, *Friedrich*. Vol. I: p82-84.
7. Wolff, *Von Berliner Hofe*. p273ff.
8. Oppeln-Bronikowski, *Liebesgeschichten*. A = p14, B = p56.
9. Arnim, *Vertraute Geschichte*. Vol. IV: p233.
10. Kolb, *Memoiren*. p347.
11. Rehfeldt, *Geschichte*. A = p144, B = p173-74.
12. Lehdorff, *Dreißig Jahre*. A = Vol. II: p199, B = Vol. I: p395-400, C = Vol. I: p257.
13. Voss, *69 years*. p21.
14. Holtze, *Chronistische*. p88.
15. Asprey, *Frederick the Great*. p391, p581, p595, p612.
16. Pangels, *Königskinder*. p235-37, p430.
17. Wraxall, *Memoirs*. p5ff, p129.
18. Easum, *Prince Henry*. p47.
19. Grossman, *Genealogy*.
20. Priesdorff, *Soldatisches Führertum*. A = p315, B = p247.
21. ADB, Vol. VII: p 652.

### Others

Reck-Malleczewen, *Sophie Dorothee*.  
Schneider, *Doris Ritter*. Vol. IV: p336ff.

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## II

# BERLIN AND POTSDAM

### *The 1600s*

Berlin, just a sleepy small town in the middle of the Brandenburg Electorate, began to grow rapidly through the mid-1600s after the Great Elector established the electorate's first standing army and garrisoned 1500 soldiers, together with 600 or so of their dependents there. At this time a Brandenburg-Prussian tradition was begun when the soldiers and their families were billeted out to the 500 or so private homes which were habitable, for there were no barracks. And so almost overnight Berlin began to take on the appearance of an army encampment. Both the streets and buildings of tiny Berlin with its population of less than 6000 were in a bad state of repair. Around a quarter of its houses, which were mainly constructed of timber with straw rooves, were unoccupied because they were either damaged or falling down. The sandy mire of unpaved streets often forced pedestrians to wear thick blocks of wood under their shoes.

In 1641 a regulation was enacted. Pigswill and such could no longer be thrown out onto the streets! In 1660 another regulation, with an aim to further civilize the town, declared that wanton damaging of trees and grape vines would be punished by the cutting off of a hand. A later regulation sought to protect street lanterns from vandalism. In 1658 the old city wall began to be demolished. Over the next quarter of a century a new fortification was erected, as daily a quarter of the city's inhabitant's worked on it. The new wall had thirteen bastions, was around eight metres high and had a fifty-five metre wide entrenchment zone on its outer rim. In 1667 new indirect taxes on consumer goods were introduced, the taxes being collected by a net of officials who inspected goods as they were brought through the city gates. Certainly the city wall made tax collection easier. But equally importantly it also made desertion by the soldiers more difficult.

In 1685 the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV of France led to such severe persecution of French Protestants that their very lives were put in danger. The only recourse left to them was to flee to the north. Many Huguenots and other Protestant refugees found refuge in Brandenburg-Prussia. Their arrival in Berlin in the late seventeenth century helped swell its population to 28 000 by the turn of the century. The Huguenots were highly skilled, hard working artisans who worked as shoemakers, goldsmiths, tailors, bakers, wigmakers, locksmiths etc. The Frenchmen not only radically changed local agricultural practises by teaching the local gardeners to mix animal dung with the local sand, but just as importantly they also introduced factory manufacturing techniques.

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### ***The 1700s***

During the first years of Frederick I's reign, he became King in 1701, small French-style summer residences such as Lietzenburg (now called Charlottenburg), Monbijou, and Niederschönhausen were built in and around Berlin. The developing Lindenallee began to fill up with magnificent official buildings and superb homes built by aristocrats, wealthy merchants and senior Court officials. The Arsenal, in its time one of Europe's most beautiful buildings, became the Lindenallee's first great public building. Even though its foundation stone was laid in 1695, it was not fully completed for a further thirty-six years! By the mid-1740s its ground floor held all the field artillery for the Berlin and Potsdam forces; its upper storey held more than 100 000 muskets, together with swords and massive quantities of gunpowder. In 1772 the arsenal held arms sufficient for an army of 200 000 men.

The reign of Frederick William I, from February 1713 to May 1740, was dominated by a massive increase in the size of the Brandenburg-Prussian army. At the same time within the aristocratic classes it came into vogue to be an officer serving the King. But quite to the contrary, the peasants did everything they could to avoid being pressed into service. Quite understandably being beaten up and constantly humiliated so as to subjugate them to the will of the King—so they would without thinking charge off into battle and sacrifice themselves as cannon-fodder—did not excite them much. As the army grew in strength no area of the tiny monarchy of around two million vassals remained untouched by the surging power of the military. Berlin itself was no exception. By 1720 one quarter of its inhabitants were soldiers. And of course that necessitated having quite a large powder magazine within the city walls. On 12 August of that year Berlin was rocked by a massive explosion which ripped through the powder magazine in the fortress wall near the Holy Ghost Chapel. Seventy-six people were killed, forty-six severely wounded, and many houses were destroyed.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the 1730s Frederick William I ensured quality houses were built in Berlin by ordering senior Court officials, aristocrats and wealthy merchants to build palatial homes in the Friedrichsstadt district, an area bounded by three streets, Wilhelm Strasse, Linden Strasse and Unter den Linden. To make it easier the King donated the land and the building materials. In August 1731 he sent a few companies of soldiers into the district with an order to knock down all the old, dilapidated houses and so force the poorer residents to rebuild. Frederick William had little tact, and even less patience.

By the beginning of Frederick the Great's reign in 1740 Berlin, though its burgeoning population was nudging the 100 000 mark, was still largely a garrison town 'occupied' by 25 000 soldiers with a similar number of dependents. The city had 13 000 domestic servants, of which three quarters were women. The religious toleration in the city was such that it had attracted around 5000 French, 1000 Bohemians and 3000 Jews to live there. Though seventy per cent of the people were Lutherans, some 12 500 Calvinists including the Royal Family and 8000 Catholics also called it their home.<sup>2</sup> Berlin grew rapidly throughout the eighteenth century, from a fairly small city of 28 000 at its beginning to become by the 1770s a significant

European metropolis of over 140 000. In comparison Paris in 1777 had a population of 600 000.

### THE POPULATION OF BERLIN<sup>3</sup>

Year	1661	1700	1721	1740	1777
Residents	6500	28 500	65 300*	98 000	140 719

\* Of which 12 000 were from the garrison.

In 1738 Bielfeld saw Berlin's newer buildings as looking far more Grecian, Roman and new Italian in style than Gothic. The blossoming linden trees in Unter den Linden, planted in six rows, had grown so much that they had almost reached the top of the high two storey buildings which lined the very wide avenue. Half of Berlin was protected by a high brick wall, while the other half was defended by palisades—strong, pointed wooden stakes, in close rows, fixed deeply into the ground. Before each of the fifteen city gates was a redoubt (a square fieldwork) filled with cannon. Inside the city on a hill was another large redoubt from where the surrounding countryside could be seen and defended by armed men. Behind the city wall a wooden scaffold was erected upon which the defenders could stand and shoot at attackers. Outside the wall was a dry trench or moat, whose removed dirt had been made into a defensive breastwork or high fieldwork.<sup>4</sup>

Elegant buildings began to rise in Berlin. In August 1740 the foundation stone of the much lauded Opera House was laid. Later on in that decade the Catholic Church of St Hedwig, modelled on the Pantheon in Rome, took shape. And in May 1749 building was commenced on what was to become Prince Henry's Palace. Unter den Linden was also remodelled and a library and a playhouse were built. The two royal palaces in Berlin had been built before Frederick's time. The old Berlin Palace, opposite the current Berlin Cathedral, was an assemblage of various styles. The Charlottenburg Palace, originally built for Sophie Charlotte of Hanover the wife of Frederick I, was extended in the early 1740s by the addition of an elegant east wing.

Anyone looking out through a first floor window of one of the many splendid buildings along Unter den Linden on 08 January 1749 could not have missed seeing the Prince of Lobkowitz and his entourage as he entered Berlin. Before him went his vassals: four messengers, twelve princely lackeys, four princely household officers, four pages and one head page.<sup>5</sup>

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Because the countryside around Berlin was a swamp, in the short, hot summers, mosquitoes ravaged the city. Even by the 1750s thoroughfares within Berlin were still nightmarish to travel on. Unter den Linden was not yet paved and travellers both on horse and in carriages complained about thick sand-hills along the street. On dry, windy days dust

so darkened the sky that everything appeared ‘shrouded in a brown veil.’ Often knee-high sand covered wagon wheels and everything else.<sup>4</sup> Sometime in 1772 Dr Burney set out for Berlin. The night before he reached his destination the coach he was travelling in became and remained stuck fast in a bog on a bleak and barren heath for seven cold and wet hours. When he finally reached the city perimeter, he was detained for forty-five minutes at the barrier. Then a sentinel escorted him under custody to the customs-house where he was held for a further two hours.<sup>6</sup>

When John Moore,<sup>7</sup> a Scottish surgeon and military veteran, visited Brandenburg-Prussian garrison towns he was also stopped at the gate. There the officer of the guard asked him his name, from whence he had come and to where he was going. All his answers were accurately recorded. If the visitor happened to be a Duke the guard usually turned out under arms. The conduct of the soldiers in Berlin was ‘quiet,’ and the police force was similarly well regulated. However, Moore was shocked by the ‘public courtesans’ who were ‘more numerous here than in any town in Europe in proportion to the number of inhabitants.’ The prostitutes appeared quite openly at windows during daylight and tempted passers-by in any way they wished without the Magistrate interfering. And still more. No one was allowed to molest or abuse them! As little attention was given to their customers as was given to anyone else who stepped into any other house or shop to buy any other commodity.

In 1772 James Harris, the newly appointed British envoy to Berlin, later known as Lord Malmesbury, commented that all the men of the city were soldiers. And while they were totally absorbed in their profession, they knew absolutely nothing about anything else.<sup>8</sup> Harris continued. A total moral corruption reigned throughout both sexes and in every class of life. The women were not only immodest, but they prostituted their person to the best payer (it appears they were paying him little attention!). They also lacked etiquette, sentimentality and affection. As for Frederick the Great, he was miserly and oppressive.<sup>9</sup>

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### ***Berlin Society In The 1770s***

John Moore<sup>7</sup> described Berlin society during his stay in the mid-1770s. Queen Elisabeth Christine’s public days and the soirées held at the foreign envoys houses were the places to meet the ladies of the Court. The Queen lived at Monbijou, a small palace just outside the city gates, where she held a public day twice a week. In summer she lived at Schönhausen, some two leagues (ten kilometres) out of Berlin, where she had a public day once a week. Guests arrived at 5pm, and included the nobility, foreign ministers and strangers. Her Majesty walked around the circle of guests, spoke a few words to everyone and then sat down to cards. The Queen and each Princess sat at their respective tables with their chosen guests. Then the rest of the company presented themselves at the Royal tables. Once the formalities were over the guests either walked in the garden or played cards in other rooms within the palace. Around dusk those guests not invited by the Queen to stay for supper returned to Berlin. Those remaining usually left around midnight.

While French etiquette was barely to be seen among the Prussian officers, Moore thought the ladies of the Berlin Court had more the airs of French women than those of any Court he had ever visited. In particular Fräulein de Hartfield, the Queen's lady of honour, had all the ease and elegance of the ladies of Versailles. Many married women had avowed admirers who were invited with them to all the social happenings. Not only did the lovers quite openly sit next to each other, but the host made sure they were seated at the same card table. A divorce in Brandenburg-Prussia could be simply and cheaply obtained, provided both parties agreed and they had no children. Moore often found himself in the company of a lady with her present and former husband, and was surprised by the polite and friendly way in which everyone behaved.

As John Moore arrived in Berlin the army was preparing to be reviewed. Some 36 000 troops from the Berlin garrison and surrounding towns were involved. Nothing was to be seen in the streets but soldiers parading and officers hurrying here and there. The city looked more like the cantonment of a great army than the capital of a kingdom in a time of profound peace. Not surprisingly at King Frederick's Court no women were to be seen and almost every man who appeared was dressed in a military uniform. Though he saw Berlin as one of the most beautiful cities in Europe with its regular and wide streets, Moore was disappointed by the poor interior finish of the city's buildings, which sadly fell far short of their external elegance. In most homes it was common for soldiers to be quartered on the ground floor. By this time both sides of Unter den Linden, Berlin's most fashionable walk, was paved. The centre strip, covered in a fine gravel, provided a delightful walk under the linden trees on a fiery summer's evening. Tents were pitched under the mature shady trees, and from them passers-by could buy ice, lemonade, and other refreshments. Nearby music from a practising regimental band filled the air. And as the sun sank in the West the crowds of strolling people increased. On very hot evenings people often walked until late into the night.

At a breakfast given in a garden by Prince Ferdinand's daughter, the teenage Princess Friederika Louisa of Prussia, country dancing was enjoyed all morning by the large number of guests. Our observer John Moore saw none of the state and ceremony of which the Germans were accused. Even the highest ranked personages showed the greatest ease and courtesousness to everyone present.

Anyone invited to wander through the Berlin Palace, or indeed the palaces of the Royal Princes and wealthy merchants of Berlin, decorated in the early eighteenth century style, would have seen all the walls of entire rooms decorated with rich tapestries in which all pieces formed a continuous theme. A set of tapestries for an entire room could have cost up to 10 000 talers, a princely sum indeed. Both Royalty and wealthy private citizens invested part of their fortunes in magnificent silver tables, sofas, chairs, chests of drawers, mirror surrounds, and candle and torch wall-brackets. Often whole rooms were furnished entirely with silver objects. Huge tankards and goblets, cutlery and large hand washing basins were also made from pure silver.<sup>10</sup>

Nathaniel Wraxall<sup>11</sup> visited Berlin in 1777. His critical eye found the city's buildings less

than impressive. Because there were no stone quarries in the region they were all built from bricks which were then covered with plaster or stucco. Soon after the building was finished, the stucco began to fall off to reveal the poor quality of the original materials. Also, not all was as elegant as it at first sight appeared. Sometimes a magnificent colonnade when closely inspected revealed itself to be the false front of an army barracks. 'We never cease to recollect that we are in a country where from the sovereign to the peasant every man is born a soldier,' continued Wraxall. He was astounded by a church service he attended in the Garrison Church. 'Nothing in ancient Rome or Sparta could have been more ably and artfully calculated to mix the love of glory with the rites of religious worship... the music, ornaments, and decorations are all military and all appropriate. Trophies and ensigns gained in battle float from the roof in every part of the edifice.' Wraxall felt a 'sentiment of melancholy' and an air of silence and dejection reigned throughout Berlin. He says its cause was the city's virtual complete lack of commerce and industry, coupled with the fact that the King did not live there. At noon virtually only soldiers were to be seen in the streets.

By the late 1770s, even though Berlin's population had grown to around 140 000, it only contained some 9700 houses. Many of them were so large that up to sixteen families lived within the one dwelling. Almost half of the houses had side and rear buildings. But quite remarkably only 260 or so houses had been built outside the city's defence system of walls and palisades. Much of the countryside around Berlin was a barren, sandy wasteland. Almost as soon as carriages passed through the city gates and out into the countryside they became buried up to their axle-trees in loose sand. In fact the soil was so poor that scarcely any trees with the exception of fir trees could grow. The sandy, sterile countryside between Berlin and Potsdam was a wilderness which lay mostly uncultivated and thinly populated.

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### ***Potsdam***

Both Frederick the Great and his father Frederick William I chose to live in Potsdam, not Berlin, after they became King. Both Kings ruled Potsdam, which lay some twenty-five kilometres south-west of Berlin, with the hand of military severity. Though its streets were regular, modern and constructed with symmetry, and some of its city gates exhibited Greek architectural forms, Potsdam was really just a jazzed up military encampment. In 1773 Guards and Hussars from twenty-two field regiments and other army personnel made up two-thirds of the city's 18 000 residents. Being almost completely encircled by a great loop of the Havel River, Potsdam was almost an island. As was the case in every military town throughout the entire monarchy the city always found itself placed under heavy guard to prevent desertion.

Every morning unless he was ill King Frederick reviewed his bodyguard on the parade ground in front of the royal palace. Though he was already in his mid-sixties he still galloped along the line, giving orders with all the fire of a man half his age. Brandenburg-Prussia reminded Wraxall<sup>11</sup> of a vast prison. In the gloomy centre sat the great keeper, the King, ever occupied with the care of his captives. Though the army 'encampments' of Berlin and



Potsdam were not fortified, both were surrounded by a strong wall. One of the wall's principal functions was to prevent desertion. The sentries on guard were either placed in pairs, or so close to one another, that it became almost impossible to desert without being seen. When someone was seen escaping guns were instantly fired to spread the alarm throughout the surrounding countryside. The peasants were expected to catch the unfortunate fugitive, for if he wasn't caught one of them had to take his place.

One night while John Moore<sup>7</sup> was in Potsdam two soldiers from the Prince of Prussia's regiment deserted over the wall. For the next three days parties of men traversed the fields and beat the bushes, as though they were chasing a hare. Many officers of the regiment, even some of the highest rank, rode for three to four hours a day in search of the deserters. In the end the desperate men gave themselves up. Moore described Potsdam in the 1770s as having mostly new houses built of a fine white freestone, streets which were regular and well paved and some magnificent public buildings. But sadly the interiors of the buildings, their furniture and fittings left much to be desired. The sandy Potsdam soil caused many building problems. And in some parts of the city some buildings had sunk considerably. As he walked through Potsdam Moore was surprised to see soldiers buff-belts, breeches and waistcoats hanging from almost every house. Later he found out that each household had at least two soldiers quartered in it.

James Harris visited Frederick the Great's small but resplendent Sanssouci Palace. He was most impressed by the King's kitchen gardens and hot houses: 'I never saw a greater abundance of fruits of all kinds' and he 'spares no expense in having them in as great a perfection as the climate will allow, and at all seasons.'<sup>8</sup> Almost as soon as the Seven Years' War ended in February 1763 King Frederick had the incredibly expensive New Palace built in Potsdam, supposedly to show his enemies that his country was not bankrupt. The palace opened in July 1768. James Harris adored it. It had nothing to equal its 'splendour and magnificence,' for it was 'superior to Versailles' and 'to the Escorial' (a vast palace north-west of Madrid, built between 1563-84) and to everything that he had ever seen or heard of. And the cost of the palace's furniture exceeded all belief.

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## BERLIN AND POTSDAM

1. Bauer, *Berlin*. p154.
2. Hubatsch, *Frederick the Great*. p35ff.
3. Nicolai, *Beschreibung*.
4. Bielfeld, *Friedrich*. Vol. II: p132-33.
5. Holtze, *Chronistische*. p77.
6. Chorley, *Modern German Music*. p140.
7. Moore, *A View*. p110-29, p163-83, p254-55.
8. Malmesbury, *Letters*. p255-63.
9. Malmesbury, *Diaries*. p83.
10. SVGB, Nr. 50. p118-120.
11. Wraxall, *Memoirs*. p50-53, p112, p132-35.

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House of Hohenzollern  
Rulers of Brandenburg-Prussia



5. Frederick William I



6. Queen Sophie Dorothea



7. Crown Prince Frederick (Frederick the Great)



8. Queen Elisabeth Christine



House of Hohenzollern  
Rulers of Brandenburg-Prussia



9. Princess Wilhelmine



10. Prince Henry



11. Frederick the Great



12. Margravine Friederike of Brandenburg-Schwedt



House of Hohenzollern  
Rulers of Brandenburg-Prussia



13. Princess Amalie



House of Hohenzollern  
Rulers of Brandenburg-Prussia



14. Princess Amalie

# III

## FREDERICK THE GREAT

So much has been written about every aspect of the life of Brandenburg-Prussia's greatest King Frederick II (1712-1786), who of course later became known as 'the Great,' that I would not even attempt to condense it all into this tiny chapter. However the main purpose of my research has been to prove the link between Frederick's sister Amalie and her lover Frederick von der Trenck. King Frederick became inextricably involved in the tragic love-story when he imprisoned Trenck, which was surely the equivalent of driving a stake through Amalie's heart. In all Trenck languished some eleven years in the mighty King's gaols—including over nine years in Magdeburg, most of which were spent chained up like a dog in a dark, dank cell. Consequently, some background research into the great King Frederick was necessary to better understand his motives and the way he behaved.

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### *Childhood And Youth*

Great sadness struck at the very heart of the Brandenburg-Prussian Royal Family twice in the first five years of Crown Prince Frederick William's marriage to Sophie Dorothea of Hanover when the first and second born Royal Princes, Frederick Ludwig and Frederick William, died in May 1708 and July 1711 respectively. The fear that no heir would survive to eventually succeed to the throne became so great that the sickly reigning monarch Frederick I remarried in an attempt to remedy the situation. However on 24 January 1712 all was turned around. Great joy reverberated throughout the Royal city of Berlin when repeated salvos of booming cannons announced the birth of Prince Frederick. His elated grandfather Frederick I wrote that God had given him: 'this morning, at half past eleven' a well formed grandson and Prince of Prussia and Orange.<sup>1</sup> (The duchy of Orange was lost to Brandenburg-Prussia in 1713, after the signing of the Peace of Utrecht.) Frederick was a somewhat sickly child. No doubt the inbreeding of his parents who were first cousins and their forebears had much to do with it. As time went by the Prince's bullying father Frederick William became increasingly intolerant of his sickly state.

At Monbijou Palace where his mother frequently stayed, Frederick was raised in a pseudo-French Court where virtually only French was spoken. There, he listened to his mother's constant criticism of his father's crude behaviour, of his rough and ready soldier-like lifestyle, of the vulgar German dialect he spoke, and of his loathing of the French language. In his teens Frederick learnt to abhor the crude atmosphere created by his father's cronies in the 'Tobacco Parliament,' where heavy drinking, smoking and cruel horseplay



was the order of the day. His so open rejection of his father's way of life, together with his intense love of learning, further infuriated his father, as did his pretty clothes and his long, effeminate hairstyle. The older Frederick grew, the more his father's rage towards him increased. Soon the verbal abuse turned into physical manhandling in public, as the King appeared determined to frequently humiliate his eldest son.

Sadly Frederick's reaction to his father's rages only encouraged more abuse and more aggression. His elder sister Wilhelmine summed it up: 'The King could not bear my brother, the Crown Prince, because he saw he would not subjugate himself to his father. He constantly quarrelled with him and his aversion to his father was so deeply ingrained, that the Queen's advisors suggested he should yield to his father, something she up to now had not allowed.'<sup>2</sup> In the late 1720s open warfare broke out between father and son. (See Chapter I of Book II for full details.) In 1728 the sixteen-year-old Frederick wrote to his confidant and possible lover Borcke: 'The King continues in a bad temper; he growls at everyone, is pleased with no one, not even with himself... he is terribly angry with me; there is no possibility of a reconciliation.' We have accursed scenes here every day. I am so tired of them that I would rather beg my bread than live any longer on this footing.<sup>3A</sup>

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### ***King Frederick II***

On 31 May 1740 Frederick succeeded his father Frederick William I as King of the still tiny Brandenburg-Prussian monarchy with around 2 250 000 subjects. State revenues totalled some seven million talers of which eighty-five per cent was spent on the army. Though Frederick's family had ruled its most populous province of Brandenburg for more than three hundred years, they had only gained the distant Prussian domains in 1618. So though Frederick was the King IN Prussia and only the Elector of Brandenburg, his family's traditional power base was in Brandenburg. That is why I use the term *Brandenburg-Prussia* and not just *Prussia* throughout most of this book.

In the first years of his reign Frederick lived in the Charlottenburg Palace, while his estranged wife Elisabeth Christine lived in the Berlin Palace in winter and her Schönhausen Palace in the warmer months. By the mid-1740s Frederick's new home, the Sanssouci Palace in Potsdam, began to take shape. Though relatively small in size, it was resplendently built and furnished. He moved in in May 1747, and except when away at war he lived there, worked there, and held his Court there until his death. Quite deliberately foreign envoys were kept at arm's length from Frederick's Court. He had seen the damage they had done at his father's Court, and he was intelligent enough neither to allow them to spy upon him from close up, nor to undermine his position. In the late 1770s Wraxall says no foreign envoy was permitted to present himself to the King except on special business, and only then after formal permission had been granted. Not even members of the Royal Family were allowed to intrude on his privacy, except by express invitation. No military officer dared to leave or arrive at Potsdam without the King's permission, otherwise he was at once

put under arrest and severely punished.<sup>4</sup> Business with the King was transacted by letters. Every petition or proposal had to be done this way. Even his army generals who wished to promote a cadet to the rank of an ensign had to follow this procedure. But the system did have logic on its side; even the poorest of Frederick's subjects who wrote to him was sure to receive an answer.<sup>5</sup>

Upon becoming King Frederick could have avenged the previous injustices that senior generals and officials had inflicted on him. But generally speaking he excused them, provided they did their jobs well. His generals were told that non-commissioned officers and enlisted men were to be treated humanely and beatings of cadets were to cease. Frederick undertook the major legal reforms which his father had begun, but had then virtually abandoned because of the huge expense required. The use of torture in criminal interrogations was also abolished. None the less, one underlying theme dominated Frederick's way of thinking. All army and Government posts of any authority were filled by aristocrats. He believed the power of the aristocracy was a natural law which had to be maintained. And though he centralized political power in Potsdam and Berlin, he allowed the aristocrats to retain control over local matters. The peasants were to be kept in their place and their future prospects looked grim, indeed, as they continued to be little more than serfs. Petty theft was still punished in 1751 by putting people in stocks in public places. In Berlin on 26 November of that year a woman was put in neck-irons for stealing cloth from a merchant.<sup>6</sup>

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### ***The Two Silesian Wars***

Having no natural barriers to hinder an enemy invasion the State of Brandenburg-Prussia was difficult to defend during a time of war. Indeed, her long borders and many distant, scattered territories seemed tailor-made to make an invading army's task easy, with barely any part of the Kingdom more than a week's march away from enemy territory. In 1737 Crown Prince Frederick stated the obvious when he wrote to Field Marshal Grumbkow, saying the death of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI would bring vast upheavals with each Kingdom grabbing what it could. Three years later, and now King, Frederick was determined to fulfill his prophesy. The Emperor died on 20 October 1740, less than two months after he invaded the Austrian province of Silesia on 16 December and triggered off the First Silesian War (1740-42). No doubt Frederick thought he could take advantage of the instability in Vienna. There, the Emperor's daughter, Maria Theresia, in her early twenties, had inherited all his lands but not his imperial title.

Though his forebears, the Great Elector, Frederick I and Frederick William I had acquired land through 'services rendered' to the Emperor, Frederick finally broke forever the umbilical chord that had existed between Brandenburg-Prussia and the loose alliance of German States called the Holy Roman Empire, which for hundreds of years had been headed by the Habsburg dynasty of Austria. Frederick must have read the Political Testament of his grandfather, the Great Elector, which was rediscovered in 1730. The testament not



only included claims based on 'historical facts' to several duchies within Silesia, but also foresaw the whole of the province in his family's hands. While the Brandenburg Electorate was the power base of the Hohenzollern family, it had virtually no manufacturing base. Much of its land was poor, virtually sterile, sandy soil. In contrast, Silesia was a rich province just sitting on Frederick's doorstep, simply a temptation too great for him to resist.

The winter invasion of Silesia was totally unexpected by Vienna, for at that time in history gentlemen simply did not fight wars in winter! Incredibly the province was defended by less than 3000 troops, who were mainly stationed in small city-fortresses such as Glatz and Neisse. Though the Austro-Hungarian monarchy had some ten million vassals compared with Brandenburg-Prussia's two and a quarter million, its army was barely fifty per cent larger and was most certainly not as well trained.

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#### THE ARMY STRENGTHS OF THE MAJOR EUROPEAN POWERS

	1740	1756
France	199 000	213 000
England	30 000	48 000
Hanover	22 000	29 000
Russia	170 000	172 000
Austria	148 000	177 000
Prussia	99 500	154 000
Sweden	37 000	48 000
Imperial	40 000	30 000
Saxony	28 000	21 000

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Frederick invaded Silesia with 28 000 troops, with 12 000 men held in reserve. His artillery corps took twenty 3-pounders, four 12-pounders, four howitzers and six large mortars. After he seized the province he offered large bribes to two Austrian Government officials—200 000 talers to Sinzendorf and 100 000 talers to Grand Duke Franz's secretary—in an attempt to persuade the Austrian Court to accept his seizure of Silesia. Throughout his forty-six-year reign Frederick often used massive bribes to get influential members of foreign Courts sympathetic to his interests.

On 10 April 1741 as the battle of Mollwitz raged, the great General Schwerin argued with King Frederick that he should leave the battlefield. All appeared lost. The kingdom could afford to lose a battle, but not its King. After Frederick fled the scene Schwerin turned things around and won the day. But from that time onwards Frederick never publicly mentioned his own flight from the battlefield, nor did he ever attempt to justify it. At Chotusitz in Bohemia on 17 May 1742 Frederick commanded his troops for the first time. While the Austrians lost some 6000 killed, he barely lost one third of that sum in dead and wounded. By the Peace of Breslau signed in June Frederick's claim to virtually the whole of Silesia was recognized by Austria. His prize was huge! The acquisition increased the area of his domains

by over forty per cent, and included rich farm lands, a prosperous cloth manufacturing industry, more than one million subjects and an annual income of 4 500 000 million talers. No longer could other European Courts consider Brandenburg-Prussia to be a joke. And as the next two decades would show, she was by now a significant European power.

The Second Silesian War began on 14 August 1744 when Frederick, together with his brothers August William and Henry, at the head of an army of 80 000 men headed for Bohemia. The army marched in three march columns—one through Dresden, another through Lausitz and the third through Braunau in Silesia. The siege of Prague began on 02 September. Its 14 000 defenders surrendered within two weeks. Then Frederick headed for Budweis. However, after the Austrians rallied and dysentery and typhus struck his army many thousands of his troops began to desert. Soon he found his infantry reduced to around a quarter of its original strength and he was forced to evacuate his troops from Prague and withdraw.

By mid-1745 Frederick was ready for another battle, as he let an Austrian-Saxon army come over the mountains into Silesia. When the enemy saw the fires burning in the distant Prussian camp they did not know their tents were empty, that they were already being stalked. At 2am on 04 June at Hohenfriedberg, 58 000 Prussians launched a surprise attack. The victory was stunning with over 15 000 enemy troops being killed, wounded or taken prisoner. Sixty-three cannon and seventy-seven colours and standards were also captured, together with four generals and thirty officers. Another 10 000 or so deserted. Amazingly, Prussian losses were less than 5000. Not only was Austrian morale smashed but Frederick's fame was elevated to that of a great military strategist. Frederick captured Dresden in December. On Christmas Day the Peace of Dresden was signed. The Second Silesian War was over, and once again a piece of paper confirmed Brandenburg-Prussian rights to Silesia. But as we shall see treaties are usually not worth the paper they are written on.

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Though still only in his mid-thirties, Frederick already began to appear a little stooped. Haemorrhoids and gout began to plague him, and indeed they never let up on him for the rest of his life. Doctors were ever present, for he had become a hypochondriac. Being a heavy user of snuff most certainly would not have helped—he had a collection of dozens of porcelain snuff boxes valued at over one million talers.

By this time in history Frederick had already become known as 'the Great.' Through his further military conquests his fame would spread throughout the world. And what gave him the 'edge' over his enemies in battle? The discipline of his soldiers, perhaps better described as robots, who were controlled by his unrelenting, merciless, soul-crushing despotism. One day while reviewing his troops in Pomerania, he asked the old Prince d'Anhalt what he admired most about the scene they saw before them. He said he admired the fine appearance of the men and the perfection of their drill movements. Frederick got much closer to the point. He was astonished they could both be perfectly safe surrounded

by 60 000 men who were their irreconcilable enemies. Furthermore, though each soldier had more strength, and was better armed than both of them, they all trembled in their King's presence. Such fear he concluded was the wonderful effect of order, vigilance, and determination.<sup>7</sup>

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### *The Seven Years' War*

Probably from the time he ascended the throne Frederick had been developing a spy network to keep an eye on his enemies. Certainly from 1747 onwards Weingarten, the Austrian envoy's secretary in Berlin, was on his pay list. And in the Saxon capital of Dresden a chancery clerk called Frederick Menzel had from early 1752 reported the secrets of the Saxon Cabinet's correspondence with Petersburg, as it was then called, and Vienna.<sup>8A</sup> Ever since Frederick had stolen Silesia from Austria, he knew his mortal enemy Maria Theresia would try to destroy him if and when she could. But not only that, the Russian Czarina Elisabeth was also for some reason personally embittered against him and wanted also to destroy him. Fortunately for Frederick his spy network was first class. By 1756 he knew his enemies intended to attack him in the spring of 1757. But before he went on the attack he at least twice asked the Austrian Empress Maria Theresia to give him an undertaking that she would not attack him in 1756-57. Her refusal to do so gave Frederick no choice.

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#### **THE BRANDENBURG-PRUSSIAN ARMY IN AUGUST 1756<sup>9</sup>**

Gardes:	4 Battalions	2 912
	1 Squadron Garde du Corps	200
Field Troops:	29 Grenadier Battalions	19 198
	93 Musketeer Battalions	69 750
	1 Company of Hunters	150
	60 Squadrons of Cuirassiers	10 032
	70 Squadrons of Dragoons	12 498
	80 Squadrons of Hussars and 1 Troop of Lancers	10 576
	2 Battalions of Field Artillery	2 028
	2 Battalions of Pioneers	1 500
<b>Total</b>		<b>128 844</b>
Garrison Troops:	36 Battalions of Infantry	25 020
	7 Companies of Artillery	1 400
	2 Companies of Miners/ Bombadiers	200

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The officer ranks in the Brandenburg-Prussian Army in the 1700s were: Field Marshal, infantry general, cavalry general, lieutenant general, major-general, colonel, lieutenant colonel, major, captain, cavalry captain, staff captain, premier lieutenant, second lieutenant, lieutenant, standard-bearer and cornet.

## 15. MAJOR BATTLES OF THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR



On 29 August 1756 at the head of his army Frederick, together with his three brothers, August William, Henry and Ferdinand, marched into Saxony. Against token resistance he first seized its capital of Dresden. In the palace he found a document which discussed the defeat and dismemberment of Brandenburg-Prussia by Austria, Russia and Saxony.

1756 had begun with a bang as far as the four major powers in Europe were concerned. In January Britain signed a convention with Brandenburg-Prussia to give it subsidies if a war broke out against Austria. Shortly afterwards the French and Austrians signed a pact. These alliances were the complete reversal of what had existed prior to this time. As the Seven Years' War progressed both Russia and Sweden were to side with France and Austria against tiny Brandenburg-Prussia, who was helped by the House of Brunswick. Frederick found himself, and his tiny monarchy of just over three million people fighting against two Empresses, Elizabeth of Russia and Maria Theresia of Austria, the Kings of Sweden and France, and the Elector of Saxony. Austria boasted some ten million vassals, France twenty million, and Russia around fifteen million. The odds were decidedly stacked against Frederick! His army, including his allies, at best numbered 200 000 men. The combined potential of his enemies France, Russia, Austria, Sweden, the Imperial army and Saxony, was over 660 000 men. (See table earlier in this chapter.)

Fortunately Frederick had one BIG plus on his side. Both he and his people were fighting for their very existence. A loss could have brought annihilation. Though logic suggests the Alliance's combined population of some forty-five million people, together with its wealth and power must eventually grind him into oblivion, fortunately his enemies were always divided by conflicting objectives, jealousy, greed, fear and incompetence. And these festering wounds were to constantly sabotage the Alliance's attempts to destroy the tiny dynamo that was Brandenburg-Prussia. This time Frederick didn't want Saxon units at his back as they had been in 1744. Three armies went into Saxony on 29 August and began driving the Saxons backwards towards the fortress at Pirna. On 03 October 1756, in heavy fog at Lowoschütz, Frederick's army smashed the Austrian army of Field Marshal Count von Browne, who was rushing to relieve the encircled Saxons. Saxony was in Frederick's hands when Pirna capitulated on 15 October. Then he made a huge mistake. He integrated complete Saxon units into his army, rather than splitting them up and mixing them into his own regiments. Now the enemy was within. Many Saxons spied for Austria, while others fled to Poland and Austria. Around this time Frederick made it clear that should he be captured by the enemy he must be sacrificed. Neither a province, nor ransom money would be paid. And the war must be continued as though he no longer existed.

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Brandenburg-Prussia put 150 000 men in the field for the 1757 campaign. After a bloody siege in early May Prague was taken. But the price was high. Field Marshal Schwerin was mortally wounded. (See later in this chapter for full details.) The battle of Kolin on 18 June 1757 was a fierce affair. Some 54 000 Austrians and 34 000 Prussians lined up face to face.

Frederick's battle plan was to attack on the right flank (as he often did). However the Austrian General Daun was able to reinforce that side in time. Somehow the Prussian advance in the middle and on the right advanced too soon. Then Frederick led a cavalry charge which was broken by a cannonade. The Prussian casualties were horrendous at over 13 000. And worse still, the hope of being finished with the Austrians before the French and Russians came was destroyed. Then 100 000 Austrians began to pursue two Prussian armies of 70 000 men towards the north. One of the armies was led by Frederick's brother August William. The tragic story of what happened is dealt with in Chapter I of this Book and in Chapter I of Book III.

In July 1757 a Hanover-Brunswick-Hessen army under the English Duke of Cumberland was battered at Hastenbeck by a French army and forced to move northwards, after which it sort of dissolved. A second French army with Imperial troops, totalling 60 000 men, headed for Thüringen. In September 20 000 Swedish troops advanced from the north. In the same month England-Hanover withdrew from the continental war. Though this left Frederick in an even more desperate situation, it did nothing to break his resolve, nor his spirit. Early the same month Lieutenant General von Winterfeldt was mortally wounded in a battle against the Pandour chief Nadasdy.

In mid-October the Austrian General Hadik, together with 3400 men, made a lightning raid on Berlin. After extracting 215 000 talers in contributions he amazingly left the giant arsenal, the gunpowder mill, the foundry, and the cloth and arms factory undamaged! Then two key Silesian towns, Schweidnitz and Breslau, fell to the Austrians. On 05 November Frederick won an incredible tactical victory at Rossbach. Amazingly his 22 000 man army took on and thrashed a French-Imperial army of 41 000 men under the command of General Soubise. Young Major General Seydlitz led his cavalry in a storm which broke the back of the enemy cavalry. The infantrymen did the rest. Prussian casualties were extremely light at around 2000 or so. The enemy did not fare so well; it lost over 10 000 men, mostly as prisoners, including eight French generals and 260 officers! This decisive routing of the predominantly French army broke its Government's resolve, so much so that from this time onwards France caused Frederick little trouble for the remainder of the war.

Around this time Field Marshal Keith made his feelings abundantly clear that Frederick and his brother Henry had great courage: 'You may believe that this family will not live much longer, they expose themselves too much.' Frederick returned from Rossbach in Thüringen and decided against all logic that he had to attack the Austrian commander-in-chief Karl von Lothringen's 65 000 strong army with the 35 000 men he had at hand. The battle of Leuthen raged on 05 December. The Austrians losses were huge—they lost 12 000 men as prisoners, sustained 10 000 casualties and lost 131 cannon. Barely half of the shattered enemy army was able to reach the Bohemian border. Remarkably Prussian casualties reached 6400, of which 1100 died. Napoleon wrote: 'The battle of Leuthen is a master-piece of movement, manoeuvre, and resolve; they alone would be sufficient to make Frederick immortal and to give him a place among the greatest generals.'<sup>10</sup>



With a steely resolve, in December Frederick took back Breslau, the capital city of Silesia, and captured over 17 000 prisoners, including a Lieutenant Field Marshal in the process. Soon after Liegnitz and Schweidnitz were also regained. In the last three months of 1757 the 90 000 man strong Austrian army of Prince Charles had been so smashed to pieces that only 25 000 able bodied men remained. Quite staggeringly almost 40 000 of his troops had been taken prisoner and over 4000 wagons with provisions had been lost.

Though superficially everything looked rosy for King Frederick, the first two years of the war had been a massive drain on his gold and silver reserves, and had cost him more than thirty-one million talers. At the time his yearly State revenues were perhaps eleven million talers. If the war dragged on for too long Brandenburg-Prussia would end up bankrupted.<sup>8B</sup> Frederick took appropriate steps. In 1757 he set about systematically counterfeiting legal coinage by melting it down and debasing it with non precious metals. He first debased the coinage of occupied Saxony and then set to work on his own coinage. In April 1758 England, under its new Prime Minister William Pitt, agreed to pay a yearly subsidy of £670 000 to help keep his army in the field. Frederick debased this coinage too!<sup>11</sup>

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In early 1758 Frederick still controlled Brandenburg, Pomerania, Saxony and a part of Silesia but had lost distant Prussia to the Russians. How could the 170 000 Prussians in the field continue to hold off an estimated 310 000 enemy troops? Frederick wrote a few months earlier: 'One must fight and fall for his fatherland to save it; and if one cannot (save it) it is humiliating to survive.' By June the Russians began to threaten Pomerania, the New Mark and Silesia. In August Frederick headed north towards Küstrin, a fortress just eighty kilometres east of Berlin, which soon found itself under a Russian siege. On 25 August a ferocious battle was fought at Zorndorf just north of Küstrin. Within twelve hours 21 000 Russians and almost 13 000 Prussians fell, either killed or wounded. When it was all over Frederick refused the Russian commander Fermor's request for a three-day truce to bury the dead. They were his responsibility. He had won the battle and so he, not Fermor, owned the battlefield!<sup>8C</sup>

Another slaughter was not long in coming. On 14 October it took place at Hochkirch. The Austrian General Daun's 78 000 strong army outnumbered the Prussian army almost two to one. In a terrible slaughter the Prussians lost over 9000 casualties, or about one-third of its army, and over 100 cannon.<sup>8D</sup> The mighty, old Field Marshal Keith and Prince Franz from Brunswick were both killed. Devastatingly, Frederick lost 246 officers! Could his army ever recover from such a telling blow? Losses on this scale could not be sustained for long. By now Frederick's fame had grown world-wide, wrote Lord Macaulay. For the past year he had been able to hold the advantage against three powers, the weakest of which had more than three times his resources. He had fought and won three of four great pitched battles against them. The defeat of Kolin, repaired as it had been, raised his military renown. His victory at Leuthen is to this day the proudest on the Prussian roll of honour.<sup>10</sup>



As had been the case during the two Silesian wars, Frederick's armies were constantly under attack by raiding bands of irregular (now called guerilla) troops during the course of the Seven Years' War. The Pandours came from Croatia, the Cossacks from southern and south-west Russia. Being barely civilized, when they got out of control, they raped and pillaged whoever and whatever they could. Foolishly Frederick held them in contempt, as being men without honour and unfortunately he never recognized the advantages, nor the dangers, of guerilla warfare. Once Pandours plundered his camp, and at least twice during his campaigns they almost captured him.

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In 1759 Frederick knew his greatest threat would come when and if the Russian and Austrian armies joined up and fought together against him. He had to keep them from one another. In March he weighed up his position. Things did not look good. He would have to fight against a combined enemy force he estimated at 300 000 troops with an army barely half that number. How much longer could his tiny kingdom resist such a massive weight of numbers? The British Ambassador, Sir Andrew Mitchell, not only spent fifteen years at Frederick's Court, but he also accompanied him on his campaigns during the Seven Years' War. Mitchell summed Frederick up. No sooner did one project fail that he would be ready with another. No disappointment discouraged him. No success elated him beyond measure. The fatigue his body and mind endured was indescribable. And yet in spite of all that he always appeared perfectly tranquil, even in the most unfavourable and perplexing situations.<sup>12A</sup>

On 12 August 1759 the battle of Kunersdorf, near Frankfurt on the Oder River, barely 80 kilometres from Berlin, raged. Frederick's 50 000 strong army locked horns with a Russian army of the same size under Saltykov, while 20 000 Austrians under Loudon hurried to reinforce the Russians. Just when it looked like the battle had been won Frederick went in for the kill. That is when the Austrian troops arrived and struck like a hammer! Frederick not only lost 19 000 casualties with 6000 dead, but also 170 of his cannon were captured.<sup>8E</sup> Enemy losses amounted to 16 000 casualties. Frederick had two horses shot out from underneath him, and fortunately a snuffbox in his pocket prevented a bullet finding its mark in his leg. It was such a terrible, shattering defeat that Frederick thought everything was lost. His first concern was to get a letter to his Minister Finkenstein in Berlin, that the Royal Family flee and so be saved. All his reserves were gone. He could not see himself surviving the destruction of his country and was even contemplating suicide.

As Frederick limped away from the scene of the slaughter, his letters graphically described his desperation: 'My coat is full of (bullet) holes, two horses were killed under me, my misfortune is to be still alive. Our loss is very considerable. Of a 48 000 man army, I have no more than 3000... This is a cruel reversal. I shall not survive it... I have no more resources, and to be truthful I believe everything is lost... Good-bye forever.'<sup>13</sup> Though the very future of Brandenburg-Prussia at that moment in history hung by a thread, by some

incredible stroke of good fortune the Russians did not advance on Berlin. The over cautious Austrian general Daun also allowed Frederick a little time to recover, a little breathing space. If the enemy at that time had worked together and pushed their huge advantage it is quite possible Frederick's monarchy could have been annihilated, ground into dust and blown away in the sands of time.

Worse—perhaps an even more shattering news—was about to come to light for Frederick. On 21 November near Maxen General Fink and 15 000 Prussian soldiers capitulated to an Austrian-Imperial army of 25 000 men under Marshal Daun. Frederick couldn't believe his soldiers would ever put up the white feather of defeat. After the war Fink was court-martialed, cashiered and gaoled for a few years. Most of the time Frederick and his brother Henry, in spite of their ongoing feud, worked brilliantly together during the Seven Years' War. Indeed Frederick praised Henry as his only general who never made a mistake. Nevertheless Henry often criticized his brother's military and political decisions, and neither concealed from his friends nor from strangers his bitterness against him. Henry wrote in late 1759 that he doubted the news from his brother, as it was always as contradictory and uncertain as his character: The King 'has plunged us into this cruel war and only the courage of the generals and soldiers can again drag us out of it. Since the day on which he met my army he has caused disorder and bad luck. All my efforts in this campaign and the luck that had supported me, everything is lost through Frederick.'<sup>14</sup>

As the desperate situation dictated Frederick efficiently, even ruthlessly, organized his monarchy during the Seven Years' War. When he needed money or new recruits, he rarely took long to get what he wanted. For example, though in 1756 he only went to war with 120 heavy cannon, by 1759 his persistent demands had increased this number to almost 300.<sup>8D</sup> The 1759 campaign had cost Brandenburg-Prussia around 60 000 men, so until Frederick could rebuild his shattered army he was forced to fight a defensive war.<sup>8F</sup> In January 1760 the English ambassador Mitchell succinctly summed up the situation. Prussia is exhausted. Its best officers are either killed or prisoners. The army is totally demoralized, with perhaps the King being the only exception. And as far as the King is concerned ferocity has seized his mind and cruelty has steeled his heart.<sup>12A</sup> As Spring arrived it was Henry's job to defend the Eastern Front, from the Baltic Sea to Landeshut in Silesia, against the Russians. His command of 40 000 troops, together with General Fouqué's 15 000 man army, had to contend with a combined force of 20 000 Austrians and 60 000 Russians. In Silesia the odds were no better. There, Frederick at the head of 40 000 men faced a combined Austrian and Imperial army of around 100 000 men. In July Laudon's Austrian army annihilated 10 000 troops under General Fouqué's command and captured the important fortress of Glatz.

Fortunately for Frederick the Imperial army and the Swedes were poorly led and so were never really a serious threat to him. Though the Austrians had 90 000 men in three armies in the vicinity of Liegnitz, on 15 August Frederick manoeuvred his 30 000 man army and attacked Laudon's army before Daun could help him. Both sides suffered some 3300 casualties (dead and wounded) but the battle swung against Austria when it lost 80 cannon

and 4700 of its soldiers, including six generals, as prisoners. During the battle many Austrian soldiers deserted.<sup>8G</sup> As the Seven Years' War came to a head, the Prussian situation became more and more desperate. The King was not even able to defend his own capital. In the second week of October 1760 Berlin fell into the hands of around 40 000 Russians and Austrians who occupied the city for four days and extracted a massive contribution of two million talers!

Around this time Frederick wrote to the Marquis d'Argens. He knew the very future of his monarchy hung in the balance: 'I am like a mutilated body from which a few parts are torn daily. You cannot imagine the terrible strains we endure: this campaign exceeds all previous ones and I often don't know which way to turn. My cheerfulness and good humour are buried with the beloved friends so close to my heart. The close of my life is gloomy and painful.'<sup>15</sup> Frederick again wrote to the Marquis in October, showing his grim resolve to fight on: 'We shall recover Leipzig, Wittenberg, Torgau, Meissen; but the enemy will keep Dresden and the mountains of Silesia, and that will place him in the position next year to deal me a deathblow' but 'no persuasion, no eloquence can drive me to' a dishonourable peace. I am resolved to risk all, to try the most desperate measures.<sup>12B</sup>

On 03 November Frederick's 44 000 soldiers locked horns with the Austrian Daun's 50 000 men in a terrible battle at Torgau. Incredibly, not only three horses were shot out from beneath the mighty King, but a bullet knocked him to the ground, though it did him no serious damage. The outcome was supposedly a Prussian victory as they suffered 2000 less casualties, though both armies lost almost one third of their men, around 30 000 casualties in all.

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Large British Government subsidies continued to flow into the Brandenburg-Prussian war chest. In 1761 the subsidy was large enough to keep 40 000 men in the field. Frederick further supplemented the subsidy by continuing to debase legal coinage, and by implementing a tyrannical system of acquiring materials, animals, money and men from his own territories and from the parts of Saxony he still controlled. By 1761 the Seven Years' War had become a terrible drain on all the warring States. Their treasuries were all but empty. Hundreds of thousands of people had been sacrificed as cannon-fodder; the same number had suffered horrendous wounds. And on top of all that famine, and even plague—it had swept through distant Prussia between 1709 and 1712—was becoming a very real possibility. The will to continue the terrible carnage was fading on all sides. That year Frederick's armies pranced around the outside of the Austrian and Russian armies in Silesia. Two-thirds of the 100 000 strong Brandenburg-Prussian army that went into the field in 1761 were foreign born. In August 150 000 Russians and Austrians under Buturlin and Laudon respectively met up not far from Schweidnitz. Not far away Frederick in command of 55 000 troops dug in at Bunzelwitz. No major pitched battle took place though the Austrians did capture the strategically important fortress at Schweidnitz in September. Soon after Frederick narrowly

escaped capture.

As 1762 began Frederick was fearful the end was near. The message coming from England was emphatic. He must yield, make concessions and make peace with Austria. Desperate measures were needed. Frederick almost buckled under the pressure. He wrote to his brother Henry. Would it not be best to unite all our forces and to throw the whole mass against the enemy? If we could smash one of the three armies (Russia, Austria, or France) we could better cope with the other two. Henry's wise counsel most likely prevented a major tactical disaster: 'If you unite all your forces you cannot survive the war. The enemy would occupy the undefended provinces and divide up the stores.' Once the enemy has taken everything our armies will not be able to return to those areas. Moreover, experience has taught us that an enemy is not destroyed at one blow... and the army singled out for attack would (simply) withdraw... we must choose the slowest death; if it takes a long time there is a chance of something turning up...'<sup>12C</sup>

When all seemed lost the Russian Czarina Elizabeth, Frederick's implacable enemy, died in Petersburg on the 05 January 1762. Her successor Czar Peter III, almost as soon as he ascended the throne, withdrew his troops from the Seven Years' War. On 05 May a peace treaty was signed with Russia. Seventeen days later peace was made with Sweden. On 29 October the last major battle of the Seven Years' War was fought at Freiberg. Henry, the King's brother, aggressively attacked an Austrian army and stole a brilliant victory. Frederick, justly alarmed for his brother's safety, marched to his assistance but arrived a day too late. Frederick's detractors claimed he never forgave Henry for so gloriously ending the war without him.<sup>4</sup> Finally on 15 February 1763 a peace treaty, signed with Austria at the Hubertusburg Palace near Leipzig, brought hostilities to an end. Incredibly the treaty confirmed all the territorial possessions as they had been before the war began in 1756! Finally, after fighting three wars, Frederick had consolidated his rights to Silesia.

Some four decades later Napoleon said: It was 'not the Prussian army which had defended Prussia for seven years against the three greatest powers in Europe' it was 'Frederick the Great.'<sup>3B</sup>

The price paid by the Brandenburg-Prussian people during the war was horrendous. More than ten per cent of the population, perhaps even as many as 500 000 people, had perished. The war had cost an estimated 140 million talers. Throughout the Kingdom countless private fortunes had been lost. Pandours had ruthlessly plundered and cut a swathe of misery with their scimitars throughout Silesia. Equally brutal Cossacks by the thousands had let loose their rage in Prussia, Pomerania and Brandenburg. Invading armies had made levies of more than \$100 million on the hapless ordinary populace, and probably destroyed property worth far more than that amount. Fields lay uncultivated, the seed corn having been foolishly devoured in the madness. Famine had swept away the herds and flocks. Any means of transportation was virtually non existent, for the King had requisitioned every wagon and steer. The little manufacturing there had been before the war no longer functioned. Even shoes were scarce.

Between 1740 and 1763 Brandenburg-Prussia lost sixty generals, and sixty-five colonels, lieutenant colonels and majors on the slaughter fields of Silesia and Bohemia, including the great generals Schwerin, Keith and von Winterfeldt.<sup>16</sup> In the Seven Years' War alone some 1500 officers gave their lives for the fatherland. Remarkably during the course of the long war Frederick had returned home only once, for a week in January 1757 when he visited Berlin. Throughout the remainder of his reign, which lasted until August 1786, he did everything necessary to remain on good terms with Russia. At almost any price he had to prevent another French-Austria-Russia pact forming against him.

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### ***An Absolute Ruler***

For better or for worse, we learn the behaviour patterns and inherit the best and the worst qualities of our parents and forebears. Frederick William I had a disgusting, almost uncontrollable temper, and had even suffered bouts of temporary—some would say permanent—insanity. His reign of terror over his subjects had not set a good example for his son to follow. Like his father, Frederick was also an absolute monarch who could do and behave as he chose, and at times—like any man in that position would do—he abused his power.

Frederick William had taught his son the necessity of a strong army to defend the State, and the 'work ethic' necessary for its relentless administration. Through the maternal side of his Hanoverian forebears, his mother Sophie Dorothea, but particularly through his grandmother Queen Sophie Charlotte of Prussia, Frederick had inherited his love of music and the arts. Like his father before him, Frederick prided himself on being his State's hardest working servant. He was a disciplined workaholic whose day often began around 4am. Evidence of his hard work are the many, huge volumes of official documents like the *Acta Borussica*, which show his involvement in every level of Government. From road building to land reclamation, from postal reform to appointing Government officials, he got involved.

Frederick almost always spoke French. In fact he was said to have spoken German quite badly. His nature was extremely contradictory. For he could be both idealistic and pragmatic. When it suited him he was polite; when not he was devastatingly coarse. After behaving like a patronizing friend he could then turn into a tyrant. But why shouldn't King Frederick have behaved EXACTLY as he wished. He was an absolute ruler, who if he so chose could do virtually anything he wanted, almost without any limits. Therefore it shouldn't surprise anyone that he controlled his siblings who stayed within his monarchy with a rigid discipline. He decided where and how they lived. He decided their income. He decided when his brothers were promoted in the army. He controlled their lives, just as he did the lives of all his other vassals. Although he did soon promote his younger brothers in the army, Frederick's comments on their studies and behaviour struck a strikingly similar tone to the words used by his father to reprimand him. His scathing comments, and the marked indifference which he showed towards August William, Henry and Ferdinand eventually led to severe squabbles. It could even be

said his younger brothers came to hate their elder brother, the all controlling King.

Undoubtedly the deprivation he suffered and the brutality he saw during the Seven Years' War scarred Frederick's life forever. He became bitter and even more despotic. He also lost interest in his appearance, and began to wear dirty, snuff-stained uniforms which were worn long past the time when they should have been discarded. Though Frederick has a claim to immortality, wrote Wraxall after visiting Berlin in the late 1770s, his vassals are little tempted to love him. His kingship has been driven by ambition. Neither treaties, the laws of nations, nor the principles of justice have ever held him back from pursuing the aggrandizement of his monarchy. The First Partition of Poland in 1772\* revolted every mind not insensitive to the distinctions of right and wrong. His own glory, and never the happiness of his people, has always dictated his political conduct. Though not cruel, he is oppressive. And though he rarely permits capital punishment, his heavy taxing of his subjects undermines their happiness almost as much as would the most severe penal laws.<sup>4</sup> In 1766 increased taxes on beer, wine, spirits, meat and other foods were collected with relentless severity. Customs officials, who became hated by the people, waited at the city gates, and conducted house-to-house searches looking for smuggled goods.<sup>11</sup>

As the other European Kings did, Frederick swapped alliances around when it suited him. And throughout his rule Russia, Saxony, Sweden, England, and France were in turn his allies or his enemies. Only Austria—his mortal enemy—constantly remained on the opposite side. Frederick materially altered the balance of power in Europe by almost doubling the size and revenues of the monarchy he had inherited. By his death in August 1786 Brandenburg-Prussia's population had grown from two-and-a-quarter million in 1740 to around six million—with perhaps one-third of the growth coming from the new territories he had stolen.

Though the great King built the Opera House and lavished enormous sums of money upon actors and musicians, and sponsored the Academy of Sciences, he provided little for his subjects. Indeed he ensured that French, a language his peasant stock was not familiar with, was the language of learned and literary thought. Not only were peasants and other inferior classes suppressed, but they were deliberately kept in their places. Frederick never encouraged peasants who had outstanding natural ability. On the contrary, he ensured the continued dominance of the aristocrats, the class he believed Nature had chosen to rule over the masses. Frederick spent around £70 000 annually for the opera at Potsdam and Berlin. Some of his favourite artists, like the dancer Barbarina Campanini who was probably also his lover, were paid small fortunes to work for him. Others, like C.P.E. Bach, he paid a pittance. Always needing absolute control over everybody, Frederick even had a rule that singers could not marry while in his service.<sup>4</sup>

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\* In the carve up Poland lost twenty-five per cent of its land and five million people. Russia and Austria gained some two million and 2.7 million people respectively. Frederick took the relatively small, but strategically and politically important West Prussia, 416 000 people, and finally got the all important land-bridge to Prussia.<sup>8H</sup>



Frederick tended to ridicule Christianity. At his Court—where he always completely dominated conversation—history and literature were frequently discussed. However, the absurdity of all the religions known to man was the chief topic of conversation. And the audacity with which doctrines and names venerated throughout Christendom were treated, even startled people accustomed to the ideas of the French and English freethinkers.<sup>10</sup> Frederick said all religions were more or less based on such absurd fable, that anyone with common sense who studied them could not fail to come to the same conclusion. Even so, believers had to be treated with respect so as not to shock them.<sup>12A</sup>

Northern Protestant Europe looked upon Frederick as the great Protestant hero who would save them from the aggressive, territory seeking Catholic States of Austria, France and Spain. His fame as a general brought adventurous spirits from every European state from Spain to Russia, including up to an estimated 25 000 Frenchmen, to fight under his flag.<sup>4</sup> Frederick's army, which ate up almost two-thirds of State revenues, grew from 72 000 in 1740 to 195 000 by the 1770s. Lord Macaulay says severe discipline was used within the Brandenburg-Prussian army. Military offences were punished with such barbarity that to be shot was considered to be a secondary punishment. Frederick's policy was simple. The more severely the army was governed, the safer it was to treat the rest of the community leniently.<sup>10</sup> The Brandenburg-Prussian army was mainly composed of provincial regiments. In peacetime, each regiment was always quartered in or near the canton from which its recruits were drawn. All the sons of a peasant, except one who could remain to work the farm, were expected to go into the army. However Frederick tried to save his own peasantry as much as possible by getting as many recruits as he could from other countries. While the foreign recruits remained constantly with their regiments, the native born soldiers got eight to nine months furlough every year, so they could return home and work. The result was an immense savings in army expenses and a great gain in labour to the State.<sup>5</sup>

Early one morning while staying in Potsdam John Moore took a walk. About a mile out of town he saw some soldiers being drilled in a distant field, and an officer on horseback who was actively riding among the ranks, as he reprimanded and instructed the troops. As Moore got closer he noticed that the officer was the King himself, who though by now in his early sixties, observed his men with great attention to detail, and on account of some blunder by two officers of the regiment he put them under arrest.<sup>5</sup>

Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, the British envoy to Berlin for only eight months during 1750 and the most hated of all the men ever to hold this post, wrote that all distinctions had been abolished by the King. There was nothing in Brandenburg-Prussia but an absolute Prince and a people, all equally miserable, trembling before him and detesting his iron-willed Government. The Prince of Prussia (August William) dared not go one mile out of Berlin without his tyrant's leave. Another of his brother's had been banished to a country town, while a third was in frequent danger of being put into irons for daring in conversation to have an opinion of his own.<sup>17</sup>

Valori, the long serving French Ambassador to Berlin, says Frederick always despised



his enemies, especially the Saxons. He is a great general, a poet, an orator and a musician. However nobody can exercise such seduction as he. After winning you he ignores you and ends up by regarding you as his slave for servile obedience. He is hard on his brothers and keeps them in a state of dependence to which he was never subjected to in his father's days. His special failing though is his contempt for mankind. Though he talks a lot, and extremely well, he is a bad listener and meets objection with ridicule.<sup>12A</sup>

Frederick was much feared by his enemies. His plans for conquest were always most secret, and his attacks swift and decisive. Though endowed with a winning charm he could exercise at will, many of his characteristics made him unpopular: like his openly expressed scorn of humanity; the way he sacrificed his troops as cannon-fodder; how he so severely treated men who had shown incredible loyalty to him; his preference of all things French, and his open contempt for German society, its culture and language.<sup>18</sup> The way Frederick treated his eighty-four-year-old, war horse, Field Marshal Schwerin, was dreadful. During the battle for Prague in May 1757 Schwerin was on the end of a severe verbal attack by Frederick when it appeared Schwerin's army had lost the battle. Enraged by the attack the great general charged off into the enemy ranks and was soon slaughtered. Frederick would do, and always did, anything necessary to win a battle.

Wraxall<sup>4</sup> wrote that more than once Frederick had cashiered and imprisoned distinguished officers who had grown grey in his service, upon capricious, false, and imaginary grounds. Like his father, at times he was feisty, capricious, inflexible and violent in his dislikes. And on occasion he could be oppressive, unfeeling and unjust. In 1775 James Harris, the English envoy to Berlin, wrote to William Eden Esquire, about the King's current uncommon bad temper, saying the King did not entirely disbelieve in judicial (predictive) astrology. Someone had also told Harris the King had consulted a Saxon fortune teller and was apprehensive about a prediction he had made, that it dwelled on his mind, augmenting the sourness of a naturally crabby disposition.<sup>19</sup> Frederick was no angel.

In 1776 Harris noticed the 'motley composition of barbarity and humanity which so strongly marked his character.' And further the ease with which the great King's 'humane, benevolent and friendly' qualities forsook him 'the instant he acts in his Royal capacity.'<sup>20</sup> Macaulay also says Frederick repeatedly gave private directions to his officers to pillage and demolish the houses of persons whom he had a grudge against, but of course making sure at the same time that his name was not compromised. Such an order he gave during the Seven Years' War. The victim was Count Bruhl.<sup>10</sup>

It is well-known Frederick got General Tauentzien to exactly write down everything the Silesian fortune teller Lucas had predicted would happen during the course of the Seven Years' War. Also the prophecies of the brothers von Lehnin, the oldest Brandenburg prophets, were again looked at, diligently read and interpreted.<sup>21</sup>

I have been a professional astrologer for fifteen years. When I read the following paragraph written by Frederick in August 1777 to d'Alembert I was amazed. His words could have been those of an eighteenth century astrologer!: 'People have by their birth a

non erasable character, the upbringing can provide knowledge, to instill shame to the pupil over his defects—never will the nature of the thing change. The basis stays and each individual carries the primary substance of his actions in himself.

Though Frederick was, and had to be, absolutely ruthless when the security of his Crown was threatened, he overlooked, even ignored, the most virulent and indecent attacks on his own conduct and character. Nevertheless, crimes against the State were always rigorously punished. And though his subjects could criticize him, they dared not break the Laws of the land. On his visit to Berlin Moore was surprised by the freedom with which the people discussed Government measures and the King's behaviour. He even heard ticklish political topics discussed with as little ceremony as would be used in a London coffee-house. Even booksellers seemed to have the same freedom, as all kinds of literary works were sold quite openly. Cynically, it could be said that a King supported by an army of 180 000 men could safely disregard the criticisms of a few speculative politicians and satirists.<sup>5</sup>

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While researching this book I have often come across references to the beautiful eyes of various Hohenzollern family members. Just months before Frederick's death in 1786 the Marquis de Lafayette visited him. Frederick had the dress and appearance of an old, broken, dirty Corporal and was covered in Spanish snuff. His head virtually rested on one shoulder; his fingers were heavily distorted by gout. 'Yet what surprised me most was the fire, even at times the softness, of the most beautiful eyes I ever saw.'<sup>22</sup>

The great King Frederick had no legitimate children to succeed him. The next eldest brother August William's premature death in June 1758 left his eldest son Prince Frederick William next in line to the Prussian throne. Every morning the Prince was to be found on parade in Potsdam, and he was not allowed to leave the city without the King's permission. He dared not absent himself from duty, nor not carry it out well, without incurring Frederick's public wrath. Frederick William had many public love affairs. Frederick simply viewed his nephew's adultery with indifference. Though both men lived in Potsdam, the young Prince was rarely invited to the Royal table. In fact the King showed him a chilling coldness, which must have deeply hurt him. In stark contrast was Frederick's generosity towards his estranged Queen Elisabeth Christine's brothers, the two Brunswick-Bevern Princes' Ferdinand and Frederick, who each had apartments in the Sanssouci Palace.<sup>81</sup> In mid-1786 Prince Ferdinand's son Henry was installed as Coadjutor of the Grand Priory of the Order of St John. With this single act Frederick took away some 50 000 crowns yearly from his successor's revenue sources. This is yet another example of the chilling relationship which existed between the two men.<sup>23</sup>

At 2.20am on 17 August 1786 King Frederick II, known as the Great, died. Though he had become famous throughout the world during his lifetime, he died as a lonely, embittered old man.<sup>18</sup> Among other things Frederick left Henry 200 000 talers and great quantities of tokay wine, and Ferdinand 50 000 talers. Everyone, the Court, the aristocracy and the

populace, dressed in mourning clothes for six months after Frederick's death. Now the time had come for his successor Frederick William II to get his uncle back. Though Frederick had wanted to be buried without ceremony next to his Sanssouci Palace, next to his beloved horse and dogs, the new King made sure he was buried with great ceremony next to his father—the man who had brutalized and degraded him—in the garrison church in Potsdam. And in the end even the great forfeit their life, their power, and are reduced to dust.

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## FREDERICK THE GREAT

1. Lederburg, *Letters*.
2. Streckfuss, *Berlin*. p 311.
3. Cyran, *Trenck*. A = p291, B = p 316.
4. Wraxall, *Memoirs*. p55ff, p69-77, p108-11.
5. Moore, *A View*. p179-201, p225-37.
6. Holtze, *Chronistische*. p77, p81, p91.
7. Mitchell, *Memoirs*. p99.
8. Asprey, *Frederick*. A = p408, B = p481-85, C = p499, D = p506-08, E = p515-21, F = p528, G = p538, H = p598, K = p123-26.
9. Mebes, *Beiträge*. Vol. I: p8-11.
10. Macaulay, *Critical*. p36-52, p76-92.
11. Bauer, *Berlin*. p178-84.
12. Gooch, *Friedrich*. A = p135-39, B = p58-59, C = p259-60.
13. *Friedrich der Große. Ausstellung*. p208.
14. Schneider, *Friedrich*.
15. Friedrichs des Großen, *Briefe*. Vol. II: p 79-80.
16. Priesdorff, *Soldatisches*. p200-01.
17. Mitford, *Frederick*.
18. Stanhope, *A Mystic*.
19. Malmesbury, *Diaries*.
20. Palmer, *Frederick*. p206.
21. Vehse, *Der Hof*. p211-13.
22. Lafayette, *Letters*. (from 8. p631)
23. Radziwell, *Forty-Five*. p57.

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# BOOK III

## PRINCESS AMALIE & BARON FREDERICK von der TRENCK

The tragic love affair of the youngest sister  
of Frederick the Great

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## INTRODUCTION TO BOOK III

**M**y research, presented in this Book III, reveals the true facts about a famous Brandenburg-Prussian love affair which began in 1744, more than two hundred and fifty years ago. The story revolves around three complex characters: a mighty, invincible, autocratic King; a Cornet in his elite *garde-du-corps* (body guard), foolish enough to ‘steal’ a Princess’ heart and get her pregnant; and the King’s youngest sister, who forever after remained unwed and embittered. The key players were Frederick the Great, Baron Frederick von der Trenck and Princess Amalie.

Trenck had impeccable aristocratic breeding, not only was his father an army major-general, but many of his relatives were high ranking army officers, even Supreme Court judges. When he was just seventeen years old he became a Cornet in his King’s *garde-du-corps* and his future seemed assured, almost without limits. The dream ended less than twelve months later, after Trenck—as I emphatically believe—got Princess Amalie pregnant and the King threw him into gaol and effectively smashed his life to pieces. In all, the tearaway who dared to love a Princess languished for nigh on eleven years—many of them chained up like a wild animal, as the King personally instructed—in gaol.

When King Frederick gaoled Trenck, it was just like driving a wooden stake into his sister’s heart. Princess Amalie never recovered from that life shattering experience; she became forever after embittered and sarcastic. She rejected her brother’s efforts to marry her off to foreign Princes she didn’t love, and instead dedicated her life to music, to become arguably the first German woman to compose at a professional level. In 1771 Amalie became the godmother of Trenck’s second child, Karoline Amalie.

A complete, intimate biography of Princess Amalie is presented in her chapter. As is the case in Trenck’s chapter, much original research done in the Secret State Archive in Berlin is presented to the public for the first time, including personal letters and the contents of her will which show her remarkable generosity and compassion. Also included is a complete description of her resplendent 102 Wilhelmstrasse Palace, its magnificent paintings and furnishings. Evidence of her great musical talent and influence is presented. Paintings of the Princess found all over Germany, as well as in Florida USA, are shown in this manuscript.

After his release from gaol people were simply astonished as to how well Trenck had survived his long imprisonment. He eventually married a woman fourteen years his junior who bore him eleven children. His story is one of an indestructible will which not even Frederick the Great could break. His son Joseph became an Imperial Austrian Lieutenant Field Marshal.

After being banned forever from returning to Brandenburg-Prussia because of his involvement with Princess Amalie, Trenck was eventually allowed to visit in early 1787 by King Frederick William II. The new King not only repatriated him but also granted him a massive yearly pension for life.

In late March 1787 Trenck visited Princess Amalie for the first time in some forty-two years. The Princess, who had been hovering on the edge between life and death for more than a decade, died a few days later. And I am overwhelmed with thoughts she had been holding onto the thread of life with all her might, waiting to see the great love of her life once more before she just faded away, to wait for him in a place where their persecutors could no longer haunt them.

That Princess Amalie and Frederick von der Trenck fell in love at first sight and were lovers I have no doubt. That Trenck got Princess Amalie pregnant I have no doubt. That they never betrayed each other I have no doubt. Though they only saw each other perhaps twenty times, that they were always in each others thoughts till the day they each died I have no doubt. In September 1793 Frederick von der Trenck was arrested in Paris, in the midst of the madness that was called the French Revolution. He languished in gaol in terrible conditions until July 1794 when his turn finally came to be tried by the bloodthirsty Revolutionary Tribunal. However, before being interrogated he handed over a small tortoiseshell box with a picture of Princess Amalie in it to Count Bayluis as a memento.<sup>1</sup> On 26th July at 6pm at the *Barrière du Trône* he was guillotined. And so to the very end of his life, in spite of the terrible consequences to him of his affair with Princess Amalie, Trenck held close to his heart the memory of a love that started in his youth—almost fifty years earlier to the very day—with the youngest sister of Frederick the Great. His story is that of a man of indestructible spirit, a loose cannon who loved Princess Amalie right up to the very end of his life.

I searched for the love-child of Princess Amalie and Frederick von der Trenck for more than a year. I believe I have found their child. She was baptized the Margravine Friederike Charlotte of Brandenburg-Schwedt, born 18 August 1745 not far from Berlin.

In order to gain a better understanding of Amalie and Trenck I extensively researched their forebears from which they inherited all their strengths and weaknesses. Trenck's impressive family history is presented in his chapter in Book III. Princess Amalie's forebears are extensively dealt with in Books I and II.

I originally wrote a subtitle to this manuscript entitled: TRIUMPH, TRAGEDY & BROKEN HEARTS. TRIUMPH I saw as the emerging power of the Hohenzollern family, and its mighty warrior King, Frederick the Great, who indelibly wrote their family name into European history. TRAGEDY stood for the broken health of most of their family, the result of incessant inbreeding. And finally, BROKEN HEARTS aptly described the tragic marriages and love affairs which the cruel hand of fate dealt out to almost every family member.

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Wherever possible I sourced my research material using information left behind by contemporaries of Amalie and Trenck, or from those of the next generation. And to assist the reader I have occasionally condensed the views of the original writers, so as to ‘update’ their language. To my knowledge my research covers virtually all the English and German literature published between 1712 and the early 1990s which mentions either Amalie or Trenck—and much more. My primary information was found in the British Library, London, and in the State Library and the State Archive, in Berlin. Many State documents, together with personal letters involving either Trenck or Princess Amalie, are published here for the first time.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. Wurzbach, *Biographisches*. p416-20.

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## I

## PRINCESS AMALIE

*Early Childhood*

Princess Amalie, born 09 November 1723 in the Berlin Palace, was the youngest sister of the greatest Prussian King, Frederick the Great. She was the twelfth born child of fourteen children—four died in infancy—of Frederick William I, King in Prussia, and Sophie Dorothea of Hanover. Of the surviving siblings only Amalie did not wed. But why was this so? The reason is simple—her illicit, life shattering love affair with Frederick von der Trenck!

Considering the number of children her mother had, it seems quite incredible that Amalie's birth was unexpected. It appears the Queen had been sick for seven months, the major symptom being her body swelling up massively each morning. Though her doctors at first suspected she was pregnant, they finally decided she wasn't. One evening as she fell ill she recognized she was in labour, and there being no time to get anyone else baby Amalie was delivered by her father the King and a lady-in-waiting. At 4am, after all was brought back under control, her sister Wilhelmine was sent for.<sup>2</sup> Later that same day Anna Amalia, as she was christened, was baptized by the Court preacher Dr Andrea. Though she was born late at night, there seems little doubt she arrived in the early hours of 09 November for throughout her adult life that was the day on which her birthday was celebrated at Court. In 1760 Countess von Voss wrote: 'In the evening there was a great fireworks display. At the Princess' there was a banquet to honour Princess Amalie's birthday.'<sup>3</sup>

The circumstances surrounding Amalie's birth paint a clear picture in my mind. I have researched her life for over five years, and I am overwhelmed by thoughts of a mother who wanted to deny the very existence of the pregnancy, a denial which later manifested itself as a coldness towards, and a rejection of, Amalie. After baby Amalie had been washed and dressed the King sat her on his knee in front of a roaring fire. Soon the fierce heat caused her body to swell up and made it difficult for her to breathe. Fortunately in time a lady-in-waiting noticed her distress and took her away from her father before any damage had been done.<sup>4</sup> Amalie's godparents were her siblings Frederick and Wilhelmine and her English-Hanover cousins, the Duke of Gloucester and his sister the Princess Amalie.

The premature birth prompted General von Grumbkow to cheekily suggest to Frederick William that his wife must have been unfaithful to him. The King reacted aggressively to the slight, and though a public quarrel erupted between them, soon after they concluded a tearful reconciliation.<sup>5</sup>

In May 1728 August the Strong, the Saxon Elector and King of Poland, accompanied by a massive retinue which included his son Moritz, paid a State visit to Berlin and Potsdam.

Sadly the Court painter Pesne's large painting, which so magnificently captured the meeting of the two monarchs in the Berlin Palace, disappeared without trace after it was sent to Dresden. Fortunately, his smaller canvas did survive. In the painting Queen Sophie Dorothea and her daughters, including the tiny four-year-old Amalie, are seen resplendently dressed in beautiful State robes made from *Silberstoff* (a splendid silvery material). They are also wearing powdered wigs on their heads, long gloves on their hands and are holding fans. While the Brandenburg-Prussian men looked ordinary in their drab military uniforms, the Saxons looked superb in elegant French-style dress. The Royal visit was celebrated with a seemingly endless chain of banquets, balls and concerts.<sup>6</sup>

Three volleys of cannon-fire boomed out over the walls of the Royal capital of Berlin on 23 May 1730 at 11am, to announce to the world the birth of Amalie's youngest brother Prince Ferdinand which had taken place some fifteen minutes earlier. Both at Court and throughout the entire metropolis the news was greeted with great joy.<sup>7</sup>

The major social event in Berlin in 1731 was the marriage of Amalie's sister Wilhelmine to Frederick of Brandenburg-Bayreuth. Late in the evening after the ceremony and the lavish festivities had run their course the bridal bed was inspected (I guess the bride had to spill blood onto the sheets during the wedding night as proof of her premarital virginity?), and the bride was undressed by the female guests. As the unmarried girls circled around the blindfolded Wilhelmine she lifted up her crown, and held it out. An excited seven-year-old Amalie won the trophy.<sup>5</sup>

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Amalie was brought up with her three-year-older sister Ulrike. At first they shared the same bedroom in the Berlin Palace, and then later on they had adjoining bedrooms and a common living-room. For many years the two little Princesses were guided and educated by their tutor, Fräulein von Jaucourt. Around 1734 this task was handed over to the somewhat comical Fräulein von Montbail, a French Huguenot who sang the praises of France, its writers, literature, learned men and cooking. Amalie's everyday language was French and as a consequence she was called by, and she used, the French version of her name, Amélie. Recognized as being a clever and talented child she also bore the family curse of being fairly hot-blooded and moody. If something annoyed her in the morning she was not averse to throwing her slippers at Ulrike. If she thought one of her mother's boring luncheons was taking too long, she protested by stamping her little feet on the floor under the dining-table. Parmesan cheese and confectionery were Amalie's passion, and she kept them both stockpiled up in her secret 'pantry' in her bedroom. In her teenage years she must have tended to eat too much because her nickname was 'fat Lilly.'<sup>54</sup>

In an age when royal families throughout Europe day in and day out dressed their children in magnificent clothing, during weekdays the Hohenzollern children wore simple clothing. While their mother Queen Sophie Dorothea, who was always concerned with her own self-importance, always used silver and porcelain tableware her children ate off wooden

and tin plates. The Berlin Court was a serious, sad, even desperately unhappy place at the end of the 1720s. (See Chapters I and III in Book II for more detail.) A pastor named Franke who came from Halle had managed to cast a pious veil over King Frederick William. Life was not to be enjoyed, and almost everything which brought happiness was frowned upon by Franke, as though it were ungodly. The whole Royal Family suffered under the pastor's miserable will. Such joys as dancing and even telling jokes were considered ungodly. While masquerade and costume balls were the rage at many other European Courts, in Berlin they were forbidden during Frederick William's lifetime. His daughters were not allowed to wear masks for they were considered to be the height of all frivolity. They were not even allowed to wear the very much in vogue wide hooped French skirts because they needed too much material to make and so were too expensive.<sup>6</sup> In fact Christmas was the only time of the year when the King splashed out with extravagant gifts. At Christmas 1729 he gave his children precious sacred presents mainly made of jewels and silver.<sup>7</sup>

Though neither Frederick William nor his wife Sophie Dorothea had been subjected to any form of rigid discipline in their early years, this did not prevent the King from inflicting a severe, unyielding regime of discipline on his own children. At times he savagely punished them, and after that he then demanded that they love him and cower to him. All of his children were educated using severe methods which ended up both irritating and humiliating them. To make their childrens' lives even more difficult, Frederick William and Sophie Dorothea rarely showed them a united front. Often when their father ordered them to do something, their mother would then forbid them from doing it, and visa versa. Consequently, whatever the children did their actions were almost guaranteed to displease at least one of their parents.

On 11 December 1739 Amalie was examined by the Court preacher Jablonsky and the counsel Reinbeck. The next day she was confirmed in the Berlin cathedral.<sup>58</sup> If we go by Wilhelmine's three hour examination in which time she wrote eighteen closely written pages, the whole experience must have been a major event. From very early on in her life Amalie acquired a passion for music, a passion which lasted till the very moment she took her last breath. Her relentless playing of her spinet, a small harpsichord, often brought Ulrike to the point of despair. And though she always had a ready tongue, from time to time she didn't use it for days on end. Amalie's musical education was extensive. In her eleventh year both she and her sister Ulrike took music lessons from the violinist, cellist and cathedral organist Gottlieb Hayne. In 1740 Hayne, 'the only musician of significance in Frederick William's Berlin,' received the princely sum of 400 talers to teach the two Princesses. When Ulrike wrote to Amalie from Sweden in late 1744 she pointed out that her husband the Crown Prince 'also composed' music, and asked Amalie to write a Prussian march for him.<sup>29</sup> Amalie also learnt to play the lute, and contemporary observers say she was a brilliant pianist.<sup>8</sup> In fact all the Hohenzollern children were given a solid musical education. Wilhelmine played the harpsichord, the lute and composed operas. All the brothers became more than competent musicians: Frederick played the flute and composed operettas, Henry

was an excellent violinist and August William played the cello.

Hilmar Curas of the *Joachimsthal Gymnasium*, the most important school in Berlin, supervised Amalie's general education, while learned academics like the Professors' Jacques and Mathurin La Croze stirred up what was to become her lifelong interest in science. Though Amalie's everyday language was French, like her sister Charlotte she became an expert and patron of German literature. She also completely mastered the Italian language. Thiébault<sup>9</sup> says that in her youth Amalie was the object of almost universal adoration. She was not only beautiful but she was also intelligent and generous. Even towards the end of her life—after crippling illnesses had forced her to live a reclusive life for two decades—it was still generally acknowledged in Berlin that no one knew more about music than she. And though she was very much out of favour, her music compositions were still greatly admired.

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As she grew up Amalie found herself surrounded by magnificent works of art which occupied virtually every nook and cranny throughout the Berlin Palace. On the walls of the palace's picture gallery hung hundreds of works by men such as Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Rubens, Leonardo da Vinci, the brilliant Court painter Pesne and many other great masters. The gallery also featured a half sized figure of Saint Sebastian painted by her father King Frederick William, who himself was an extremely talented artist. In her teens Amalie was given her own suite of four rooms which were located on the second storey of the Schlüter portal, in the inner courtyard of the palace. One room was furnished with landscape paintings and statues. Her audience room was adorned by a velvet throne and a portrait of her grandmother Queen Sophie Charlotte hanging over the fireplace. A full sized portrait of the former Brandenburg Elector John Sigismund hung in her bedroom.<sup>10</sup>

It was not uncommon for Amalie's father Frederick William to behave in an abusive, even brutal manner. Much of his anger was directed at his two eldest children Frederick and Wilhelmine. By 1730 the verbal and physical abuse had become so frequent that Crown Prince Frederick made a number of unsuccessful attempts to flee the kingdom, and indeed he was fortunate his father did not kill him after his last escape bid in August of that year. Frederick William's barbarous, completely tactless behaviour must have scarred his children's lives forever. Upon his death on 31 May 1740 his son Frederick II, later known as 'the Great,' ascended the throne. From that time onwards a friendlier, less hostile environment developed within the Royal Family.

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### ***Ulrike's Marriage, and Frederick Von Der Trenck***

By 1743 only two of the six Hohenzollern Princesses, Amalie and Ulrike, remained unwed. On 24 July of that year Ulrike turned twenty-three; it was expected she would remain unwed, as she was too old! Amalie turned twenty on 09 November. During that year the Swedish

Court began negotiating with the Berlin Court for a marriage between its Crown Prince Adolph Frederick and either Ulrike or Amalie. Though both Courts were Protestant, there was a significant difference between them which could have been the deciding factor: the Swedish Court was Lutheran, while the Prussian Court was Calvinist. Ranke says Frederick regarded his sister Amalie as the better choice. Her health was stronger and she was more cheerful and less complex in nature than her livelier, more volatile sister. However, in the end the Swedes insisted on the older, and hence higher ranked Ulrike.<sup>11</sup> Thiébault's version of events is different. Supposedly the Swedes initially preferred the beautiful, kind natured and intelligent Amalie who was still in the full radiance of youth. However the scales were soon tipped in Ulrike's favour by Amalie's reluctance to renounce her Calvinistic beliefs. Also to ensure she was not chosen by the Swedish delegation, and provoked to do so by Ulrike who wanted to become a Queen, she behaved badly towards them and so they chose Ulrike for their Crown Prince.<sup>12</sup>

Herrn von Rudenschildt, the Swedish envoy to Berlin, undertook the initial marriage negotiations. After gaining King Frederick's assent in mid-1744 he sent word to the Swedish Court in Stockholm. Not long after the special Swedish envoy, Count von Tessin, riding in a State coach pulled by six magnificent, white horses adorned in light-blue and silver harness, arrived in Berlin. Von Tessin's entourage included the most important young Swedish aristocrats—Count Horn, Count von Fersen, Baron von Brahe and Baron von Wrangel. On 23 June the terms of the marriage contract were settled. The Swedish special envoy asked Prince August William to stand in for the Crown Prince who would not be present at the ceremony. The State rooms in the Berlin, Charlottenburg and Monbijou Palaces were resplendently furnished for the celebrations that were to follow the marriage. The King ordered that over ten days or so, a magnificent opera and various comedies would be performed. For three days Princess Ulrike's trousseau was put on public display in a room within the palace. Onlookers could see that King Frederick had spared no expense in fitting out his sister. Ulrike's weighty 100 000 taler dowry was handed over to Herrn von Rudenschildt.

On Friday 17 July 1744 Ulrike's proxy marriage,\* almost certainly to a man she had never met, was celebrated. The whole Court assembled at 6pm in the State Room of the Berlin Palace. The thirty-six or so young Swedish nobles were elegantly dressed. King Frederick wore a sky-blue costume embroidered with silver. Ulrike wore a dazzling display of shimmering diamonds and other precious jewels, most of which Count von Tessin had given to her. Especially stunning were her necklace and her two bracelets which were heavily inlaid with many large diamonds. After the ceremony was over three volleys of cannon-fire boomed out above the palace walls. In the banquet rooms 'all tableware, all chandeliers and cutlery were of pure gold. There were also four other magnificent tables in the Great Hall that were packed full, and the whole celebration went off with splendour and

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\* Proxy marriages were not uncommon among the princely houses of eighteenth century Europe.



magnificence.<sup>13</sup> After the feast came the traditional torch-dance, followed by a ball which lasted until daylight. The festivities continued on Wednesday with a dinner and a ball. The next day Queen Elisabeth Christine gave a superb garden party at her summer palace, Schönhausen. The next evening an opera took centre stage. On Saturday the Queen Mother hosted a dinner and ball at her French-style Monbijou Palace. Celebrations concluded on Monday evening at the Charlottenburg Palace with an operetta, a brilliant fireworks display on the Spree River, and a ball.

Ulrike left Berlin for Sweden on 26 July, escorted by King Frederick's *garde-du-corps* (bodyguard). Though most of the Royal Family cried their eyes out, almost predictably the hard-hearted Queen Mother Sophie Dorothea didn't. Frederick von der Trenck says he



16. Princess Amalie

met Princess Amalie during one of the celebratory evenings that took place after Ulrike's marriage. He also says he was the officer of the guard which escorted the newly-wed Princess Ulrike, together with her sister Amalie, to Stettin on the Swedish border. And that within days he and Amalie were deeply in love.

On 15 August King Frederick, his *garde-du-corps* which included Cornet Frederick von der Trenck, and his entire army set off from Berlin towards Bohemia to trigger off the Second Silesian War. Four months later, on 24 December to be precise, the King and his bodyguard, and of course Trenck, returned triumphantly to Berlin after a successful campaign against the Austrians. Trenck says he was 'received with open arms' by his high-born lady. However, after their affair was discovered he was thrown into gaol, where he remained lamenting for many weeks. He says he was not released from gaol until just three days before the army's departure for Silesia (which took place on 15 March 1745).

If Trenck and Amalie did fall in love at first sight as Trenck claims—and as I emphatically believe—they had enough time for a fiery affair to begin. A deep love affair triggered off by love at first sight (as incredibly I also had in Berlin) needs but a few hours, or at most days,

to explode into a river of passion.

In the main, the evidence of Amalie's affair with Trenck is dealt with in detail in Chapters II and III of this Book III. However, one piece of evidence which adds considerable weight to the argument that the affair did take place, is Amalie's letter to her brother Frederick after he, and Trenck as part of his bodyguard, had returned to war in mid-March 1745. Twelve days later Amalie wrote to her brother Frederick: 'I can no longer deprive myself of the pleasure of paying homage to you. My duty, my inclination and my affection, all three combined, could no longer endure this silence. It has been worse for me, as the only remaining consolation for me lies therein, in being allowed to put letters at your feet.'<sup>14</sup> This letter raises interesting possibilities. Why were Amalie and Frederick having a 'silent war' at this time? It most certainly could have been to do with Frederick gaoling Trenck and forbidding the love affair from going any further! Amalie writes of a desperate situation and that her only remaining consolation was to be able to write to her brother. Her 'only remaining consolation' from what? From a broken heart because she was no longer allowed to see Trenck? Reading between the lines gives me this clear answer. A strictly religious Calvinist Prussian Princess like Amalie would say no more than this because the affair had to remain as secret as possible.

In mid-April Amalie and her mother, the Queen Mother Sophie Dorothea, together with a large entourage of people who followed them in upwards of thirty coaches, set out for the Oranienburg Palace some thirty kilometres north of Berlin. During the ten days Sophie Dorothea was away all she did was play cards, embroider, eat and sleep. In fact during the whole trip she remained indoors except for those times when she was travelling by coach. One evening at Oranienburg as dinner-time approached the Court ladies waited for the Princess of Prussia and Amalie to appear. Eventually they found Amalie in her closet (a private room used for interviews or study) playing on a flute, dressed in a white silk corset (a close fitting laced or stiffened outer bodice) and a white dress upon which natural flowers had been sown on with silver thread, as she awaited to have her picture painted on a Dresden saucer. After dinner was over, a ball began at 7pm.<sup>15</sup>

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### ***Her Own Royal Household***

After Ulrike's marriage and subsequent departure for Stockholm Amalie remained in Berlin as King Frederick's only unmarried sister. Though he now gave her her own Royal Household, Amalie still lived at the Monbijou Palace, her mother's year-round residence from 1740 onwards. From this time until the Queen Mother's death in June 1757, the 'Berlin Court' referred to her Court. Frederick, when he wasn't away at war, only stayed in Berlin at Carnival Time—from mid-December to late January. For the rest of the year he lived in Potsdam. His estranged wife, Queen Elisabeth Christine, in winter lived in her rooms in the Berlin Palace and in summer at Schönhausen. Amalie's small yearly income of 400 talers made it difficult for her to hold Court, and she repeatedly asked Frederick for money behind her



mother's back. In March 1743 Amalie and Ulrike sent a joint letter to Frederick begging him to pay their huge gambling debts of 1800 talers and 1500 talers respectively. Later on, Henry also accumulated gambling debts. Such behaviour appeared to be acceptable to Frederick as he always paid their debts. Though Amalie's finances improved considerably with time, in her youth her generosity with money almost reached the point of wastefulness.<sup>14</sup>

In October 1745 Eleanor von Borcke, who had been Amalie's stewardess, retired after marrying Pierre Louis Moreau de Maupertuis, the famous mathematician and physicist who was the President of the Academy of Sciences. Her job had been to supervise the servants and regulate household expenses.<sup>16</sup> Frau von Blaspiel took over. A special favourite of Sophie Dorothea, she was a somewhat stern, elderly lady, exemplary in her devotional exercises. Many years before she had been locked up in the Spandau fortress after her lover Manteuffel had been suspected of being mixed up with Clement in high treason. Fortunately, her love-letters soon proved her innocence, and after a prolonged absence from Court she returned to serve Amalie.<sup>15</sup> Throughout the mid-1740s Amalie's yearly expenditure hovered around 3500 talers. In the financial year 1745-46 she received 'play and living expenses money' of 2000 talers. Her Court, together with their yearly salaries in talers (in brackets) were: senior court stewardess von Blaspiel (544); first chambermaid (202); second chambermaid (128); page von Wadel (120); young chambermaid for Frau von Blaspiel (128); two lackeys or footmen (each 88); wardrobe girl (54); Amalie's washerwoman (48); a wood carrier (64); woman dishwasher in kitchen (32).<sup>60</sup>

As the head of Princess Amalie's Court Frau von Blaspiel was in monetary terms richly rewarded with a massive annual salary of 544 talers. This sum contrasted enormously with the paltry 48 talers the humble washerwoman received. At this time a simple soldier in the army received 2½lbs of bread a day and ½lb of meat each week, the cost of which was deducted from his miserable yearly wage of just 30 talers! After Frau von Blaspiel died in the 1748-49 financial year, Countess Finkensteine 'filled in' for three months before Countess Schwerin took over, with an enormous yearly retainer of 800 talers. Throughout the first half of the 1750s the people in Amalie's Court remained the same, apart from one man. His life changed forever on the evening of 04 November 1751. All the Courts had assembled together to dine with the Queen. After dinner, as everyone played cards a terrible row broke out between Amalie and her valet H. Betgen, after she accused him of incurring many debts without her permission. Soon after he was brought before the Royal house prefecture to answer the charges and was soon after sent packing.<sup>1A, 17</sup>

By the mid-1750s, though her 'play and daily living expense money' remained at 2000 talers, as it had been for the last decade, Amalie's Court had grown to fifteen people, including: senior court stewardess, Countess von Schwerin; two chambermaids; two valets, one for the education of the page von Telsdorff; a young chambermaid and a lackey for Countess von Schwerin; two lackeys; two porters; a wardrobe girl; a washerwoman; a wood carrier; and a dishwasherwoman.<sup>60</sup> In November 1755 Amalie's Court was further expanded to include two ladies-in-waiting, Julie von Wreech\* and Fräulein von Quadt, and a cavalier.

Frau von Maupertuis returned to Amalie's Court in June 1756 to replace Countess Schwerin in the top job. Though Countess Wilhelmine Amalie Schwerin, born Countess zu Dohna Schlobittin, retired with a very generous pension of 600 talers, both she and her family were furious that all their efforts to catch and dominate Amalie had been ruined.<sup>1N,V</sup> She died in 1757.

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### ***Marriage Projects***

The negotiations between the Courts of Berlin and Stockholm, which eventually led to Ulrike marrying the Swedish Crown Prince in July 1744, were not the first attempts made to marry off Amalie. It was not uncommon in those days for a Princess to become engaged to marry when she had barely reached her teenage years. In 1736 when Amalie was just twelve years old a correspondence began between the Courts of Denmark and Prussia. Under discussion was a potential marriage between Amalie and the Danish Crown Prince. As history records the project failed.<sup>59</sup> Still further marriage projects came under scrutiny. Early in January 1744 the Russian Czarina Elizabeth proposed a marriage between her nephew the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp and one of the two unwed Prussian Princesses, Ulrike or Amalie. Supposedly their brother King Frederick II rejected the offer because he considered the Russian Royal Family to be too unstable. And this was indeed so. In his childhood Frederick had heard the story of Peter the Great's son Alexis, who had married a Brunswick Princess. In 1718 Alexis died in prison, either from an illness or foul play, while awaiting his own execution for treason for plotting against his father. A tradition had grown up in Russia where it had become almost commonplace for Czars and other Royal Family members to be murdered or to die in suspicious circumstances.

At Frederick's suggestion the Duke married the Prince of Anhalt-Zerbst's fifteen-year-old daughter, Sophie. In 1762, as Czar Peter III, the Duke succeeded the Czarina Elizabeth who had ruled since 1740. Elizabeth was the daughter of Peter the Great and a peasant woman who had become his wife. Peter III was not only impotent but was also a weakling. His estranged wife, who adopted the name of Catherine, had many lovers. When Peter gained the throne she was pregnant to Grigory Orlov (or Orlav). In late June Grigory's brother Alexei murdered Peter, and on the 28th the rule of Catherine the Great began. Remarkably she held power in Russia, not without considerable help from her many lovers, for some thirty-four years! Had history run another course, Princess Amalie could have been a Czarina! Quite amazingly that was not the end of efforts to get Amalie married off in 1744, as Frederick supposedly wanted to choose a Mecklinburg Prince for her!<sup>18</sup> In 1746 a further marriage proposal from Louis XV of France suggesting that Amalie marry his eldest son, the Dauphin, was rejected. The Dauphin died in 1765 without ever becoming the King of France.

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\* This could have been King Frederick's illegitimate child he had with Frau Louisa Eleanora von Wreech.

Charles Hanbury Williams, the British envoy to Berlin for a short while in 1750, wrote reports based more on gossip than fact, so the following information is at best suspect. Supposedly Amalie wanted to marry the Duke of Deux Ponts. But Frederick had two reasons why he wanted her to remain unwed: he wanted her to become the Abbess of Quedlinburg and spend her yearly income of £5000 (20 000 talers) in Berlin; and he didn't wish to hand over her fortune which was valued at £20 000 (100 000 talers) as a dowry.<sup>19</sup>

Apart from her yearly allowance Frederick quite often gave Amalie, especially at Christmas, special monetary gifts. However Hanbury Williams has shed some light on the subject. Rather than receiving charity Frederick was only paying Amalie some of the money that was owing to her! Her father Frederick William had handed over a 100 000 taler dowry when each of his daughters had married, and had left each of them 30 000 talers in his will. No doubt Sophie Dorothea also left a considerable amount of money to Amalie. In 1751 Amalie's sister Ulrike attempted to match-make her with the recently widowed King Frederick V of Denmark. Supposedly Frederick rejected the offer, considering it undesirable that his sister become the stepmother of four children.<sup>14</sup> More likely, Amalie herself declined the offer. In all Amalie's name was linked with at least six potential marriage projects. Some reasons have been given above as to why she did not marry some of the men. It was even suggested that with regard to the Swedish proposal she made sure she wasn't chosen. However, it is most likely she refused to go ahead with at least three of the marriage proposals because she was in love with Trenck.

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### ***A Canoness and An Abbess***

In eighteenth century Brandenburg-Prussia young Princesses were often given ecclesiastical positions which they simply gave up when a marriage proposal was accepted. In Amalie's case she was made the Canoness and Coadjutress of Herford\* when she was just eleven. Some ten years later, in December 1744, she relinquished these posts and was postulated as the Coadjutress of the much larger and more important abbey of Quedlinburg. Her sister Ulrike had previously held the post from February 1743 until her marriage in July 1744.<sup>14,20</sup> Amalie's Quedlinburg appointment caused some doubt in the Lutheran diocese. Though the senior Court preacher Meene expressed misgivings about the reformed (Calvinist) church's 'dangerously mistaken' teachings, he finally concluded that Amalie's Lutheran born mother would have taught her to respect Lutheranism.<sup>21</sup> The appointment was confirmed by the Emperor in December 1747.

Maria Elizabeth, the Duchess of Holstein-Gottorp and Abbess of Quedlinburg, died in July 1755. Though Amalie assumed control of the diocese she continued to live in Berlin in the Monbijou Palace with her mother. In February 1756 her brother August William, the

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\*A canoness was a woman living according to ecclesiastical rules, but not having taken the perpetual vows. A coadjutress was an assistant to an Abbess.

Prince of Prussia, gave a banquet to celebrate her imminent installation as abbess.<sup>1K</sup> On 07 March Amalie wrote to Frederick: 'I have not a taler with which to travel. All of the money received from the abbey was used on my equipage, for bedding, bags, livery and other necessary things. Your generous care graciously provided to me the horses, the food, tableware and gifts which I on the day of my arrival must distribute... your kindness is my only hope.'<sup>14</sup>

As Amalie's entourage set out from Berlin it included some twenty-one domestic servants to pander to her needs, including four chambermaids, three girl messengers, one secretary, two pages, two valets or personal servants, two footmen or messengers, two armed guards, three lackeys, one coach driver, and one outrider who rode ahead. Eighty-five horses were assigned to pull the heavy coaches through the deep Brandenburg sands, along the poorly maintained roads to Quedlinburg: eight horses for Amalie's carriage; two horses for two pages to ride; eight horses for lieutenant colonel and equerry Keith's carriage; sixteen horses for the two carriages carrying the chambermaids, secretary and valets; sixteen horses for the two carriages carrying Amalie's servants and Court ladies; six horses for the carriage for master chef Korn, three chefs and two male kitchen hands; eight horses for the wagon filled with copper and iron kitchenware; eight horses for the wagon taking the silver service, the silver servants, the wine clerk, and the candle and silver servants; six horses to pull the carriage of domestics; six horses for chef Champion's coach; one horse for the wagon master to ride.<sup>62</sup>

On her way to Quedlinburg Frederick gave Amalie a magnificent banquet for Amalie in Potsdam which would have done justice to a sovereign ruler.<sup>12</sup> Every day of her trip she dined with sixty important local identities.<sup>1M</sup> Amalie was not a pretentious Princess, and consequently she forbade all celebrations of her arrival in Quedlinburg on 09 April. At her installation two days later were the provosts, the Abbess of Herford and the royal envoys, Major Generals' von Catt and von Schönlich. Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick led the Abbess-elect to the altar. At the end of the ceremony six cannons mounted high up on the Quedlinburg fortress walls fired three volleys.<sup>20</sup> The valuable gifts which Amalie handed out to the senior diocese officials were valued at 5000 talers. The Quedlinburg diocese had around 13 000 inhabitants and covered 110 square kilometres. Throughout her reign as Abbess Amalie ensured that church and school positions were filled by competent men. She also considerably reduced the number of festival and church holidays and moved the legislative body to Berlin.<sup>22</sup>

Amalie's sister Charlotte, the Duchess of Brunswick, wrote of the occasion: 'What has given me great pleasure is that my sister appears to be very satisfied to be in the position in which she has been placed.'<sup>23</sup> Lehndorff, Queen Elisabeth Christine's chamberlain, also wrote that Amalie had returned wholly contented from Quedlinburg. Everyone had been delighted with her kind nature and attentiveness. Fearing that some people may not have understood the French that she normally spoke, she had spoken German.<sup>1M</sup> During her thirty-two year reign as Abbess Amalie only visited Quedlinburg twice more, in September

1765 and September 1785.<sup>14</sup>

On 11 June August William gave a banquet at his Oranienburg Palace in honour of the new Abbess.<sup>1N</sup> As his sister approached the palace in a coach, the Prince and other dignitaries, mounted on horses and wearing great wigs, with their hats under their arms, received her. At the garden entrance she passed by waifs dressed as pages and servants dressed as Swiss guards. She entered the palace to the blaring sound of trumpets and beating drums. In the main hall Amalie was met by twenty maids who curtsied and then leapt up laughing to expose large visiting cards with vulgar names written on them, such as the Countess of Culture and the Marquess von Pissenlit (*pissen* means to piss!). Amalie was then led into her apartment where a huge chamber-pot inscribed with 'For the use of the reverend mother' awaited her. Though Lehdorff thought the whole evening was hilariously funny, I am not so sure Amalie found it so.

In October Amalie returned to Berlin from Brunswick where she had visited her sister Charlotte, the Duchess of Brunswick-Lüneburg. As she passed through Potsdam Frederick overwhelmed her with kindness and gave her a beautiful engraved jewellery box (probably worth 2000 to 4000 talers) as a gift.<sup>32</sup>

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### ***Life In Berlin***

One of the greatest eighteenth century French philosophers and writers Francois-Marie Arouet de Voltaire lived in Berlin and Potsdam between 1750 and 1753. No doubt King Frederick and his remaining siblings who still lived there—August William, Amalie, Henry and Ferdinand—took full advantage of the great intellectual's presence if the following is anything to go by. At least in the first year of Voltaire's stay his mornings were often taken up rehearsing his beautiful tragedies with Frederick's siblings.<sup>12</sup> Around this time he wrote to a Madame Denis: 'It is a joy to have found a Prince (Henry) and a Princess (Amalie), the siblings of the King, who recite the (French) works with fluent skill and without the slightest accent.'<sup>24</sup>

In August 1750 King Frederick spared no expense in celebrating the visit of his favourite sister Wilhelmine and her husband, the Margrave of Bayreuth, with a three week festival of opera, banquets and masked balls. The Grand Carousel attracted huge crowds to watch the King's brothers and other important nobles, dressed in magnificent historical costumes and carry lances, compete in mock jousts. When it was all over Amalie handed out the prizes. At the magnificent Night Carousel 30 000 lamps turned the Berlin night sky into day. An eyewitness to the event was struck by the striking beauty of Princess Amalie: 'Her *Silberstoff* (silvery) dress studded with diamonds so enhanced her allure that people came in temptation, viewing her as a celestial being. Eight Court ladies dressed in *Silbermoor* (a silvery material) stood aside. Voltaire was so delighted with the celebrations he composed some very pretty verse and handed it over to the Princess.'<sup>13</sup>

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17. Princess Amalie

In 1751 the French envoy to Berlin, Lord Tyrconnel, wrote: ‘Princess Amalie, could also influence the behaviour of the heir to the throne (August William), if he one day came to rule. She is cheeky, enterprising, and would muster everything to achieve her own reputation. That she is clever and still further false, she would be one to be feared if she were able to set herself up as the advisor. By her restless nature she would spin much intrigue.’<sup>25</sup> Queen Elisabeth Christine, estranged from her husband Frederick for more than a decade, in July 1752 let out a little of her jealousy that Amalie would visit the King’s residence, a place she was never invited to: ‘It is said that on the 8th of next month the Queen Mother and the Royal Family will go to Sanssouci. I doubt not that the Princess (Amalie) will be there.’<sup>26</sup>

Lehndorff meticulously filled his diary with his observations of the people and events at Court in Berlin. In mid-1753 he wrote that Amalie was: ‘a friend of her friends who stands behind no one for generosity.’ She ‘has a charming and extremely obliging nature’ and ‘is kind in every relationship. People say she is changeable, but I believe that this arises more from the worries she often has than from moodiness. Her external appearance is enchanting, and from my view she is the most beautiful woman in the world. (It seems he is in love with her!) She is not tall, a little stout.’ And ‘one sees in her whole nature her greatness of mind. Among a hundred people one would always recognize her and her Royal origins. Her eyes are enchantingly beautiful—this she has in common with her whole illustrious family—her mouth is small and it exudes an unending grace by speaking; in brief, she is in exceptional measure kind.’<sup>1B</sup>

At a concert held on 16 September, Lehndorff says people complained that Amalie looked at no one and spoke badly of all the world, saying it was such a shame for one who is really kind to be so moody.<sup>1C</sup> Somewhere around this time the Court buzzed with talk about Amalie having made a fuss over a French colonel called Baron Glaubitz, who she had seen at the Spandau army manoeuvres.<sup>27</sup> Throughout this period both French and Italian stars of opera, ballet and comedy kept the Royal Family and Berlin society entertained. After an evening at the opera in January 1754 August William gave a Turkish-style banquet where the guests provided their own entertainment. Amalie was the Sultan, while Henry played a female slave who became the Sultan’s favourite. Countess Dönhoff appeared as a fairy. In all everything went off magnificently, and the dancing did not end until 4am.<sup>1D</sup>

In June Lehndorff wrote that Amalie was in a cheerful mood as they spoke over her forthcoming trip to Aachen. Sadly her ‘moody’ and ‘uneven behaviour’ spoils all that ‘her mind and likeable nature’ produces.<sup>1E</sup> Two months later she ‘terribly teased’ a visiting Bavarian Count Tauffkirchen. But her mocking seems justified as Lehndorff also thought the Count was the biggest idiot he had ever met.<sup>1F</sup> On Amalie’s birthday, 09 November, Lehndorff visited her and found her working like a scholar in her study, engrossed in solid reading matter.<sup>1G</sup>

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### ***A Tragic Time, July 1754***

Rohdich says that by the time Amalie had turned thirty she appeared to have greatly changed. Her remarks, often sharply sarcastic, even vicious, began to mimic the behaviour of her older brother King Frederick. Indeed, neither sibling ever shied away from coarse or savage words to tell the truth.<sup>28</sup> But right now a very important question must be asked! Why did Amalie's behaviour suddenly begin to sour around this age? What happened after her thirtieth birthday in November 1753 that broke her heart, that changed her so radically forever? In early July 1754 Frederick von der Trenck—the man who Amalie had fallen deeply in love with in July 1744—was recaptured in the free city of Danzig. Trenck had originally been imprisoned in the Glatz fortress in late June 1745 by Amalie's brother King Frederick in order to stop his affair with Amalie. Upon his recapture Trenck was imprisoned in Magdeburg for almost ten years, mostly spent chained up like a wild animal! (See Trenck's chapter in this Book III for full details.) Amalie had little to be happy about and she found it difficult to hide her embittered nature. The hand of fate had dealt her a tragic emotional life and she was unable to hide that fact from the world.

In June 1755 Lehndorff jotted in his diary: 'It is a real shame that she does nothing to become loved by the people. Her nature is pleasant, her behaviour polite and her appearance full of dignity. In short everything is at hand that is needed to make a kind Princess. But all these shining qualities are washed away through her fickleness' and 'one is not flattered by her kindness so as not to feel wounded by her unfriendliness.'<sup>1H</sup>

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Somehow by mid-1755 Amalie had amassed massive debts of 30 000 talers—an amount sufficient to buy a medium sized palace! However it must be remembered she spent much of her money on buying rare, original musical scores, precious books and works of art, which she consciously and deliberately held in trust for, and left to, posterity. Amalie's much longed for and long awaited organ arrived in December 1755. As she had done so with her spinet many years previously, practicing on it became her obsession. Though by that time in history the organ as a house instrument had been superceded by the piano,<sup>29</sup> that was not Amalie's opinion. Being out of step with society, or with other peoples views, never bothered Amalie. First and foremost she always was and had to be true to herself.

Early in the new year Lehndorff wrote in his diary that no one in the Royal Family seemed content, with Amalie quite openly loathing her brother Ferdinand's young daughter. 'The Queen and her sister (Louisa Amalie, the wife of August William) count for nothing. Prince Ferdinand is too much in love not to be jealous. Prince Henry likes neither women nor their company.'<sup>1K</sup> As was usual on 24 January the Queen Mother gave a banquet to celebrate Frederick's birthday. The Princesses and the courtiers arrived wearing rich clothing. After the banquet over 100 people, including the pages and lackeys, masked themselves as apes. Then the carnival procession began, led by Reisewitz, then Amalie as the Abbess, Princess Ferdinand as a pilgrim, Lehndorff as an old Frenchman... Later on the orchestra,

sitting in a charmingly painted theatre that had been erected in the elaborately illuminated gallery, began to play. Amalie, who had especially composed the music for the occasion, accompanied on the piano. In closing off his diary entry Lehndorff mentioned the coldness, even more the jealousy, that made itself perceptible from time to time among the Princesses.<sup>1V</sup>

In early 1756 La Touche, the French envoy to Berlin, wrote to his masters in Paris: ‘She (Amalie) is indeed arrogant and of the most sophisticated courteousness. She is proud and seeks always to see through the behaviour of the King, her brother. Evidence of this is that she on the occasion of the signing of the (Neutrality) Convention with England (in January 1756) said with all her heart to Countess Camas: “Well, dear Mama, that is again a new stroke of genius of the King, of our dear brother, who forever must try the friendship and trust of the remaining rulers.”’<sup>25</sup>

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### ***The Seven Years’ War (1756-63)***

The Seven Years’ War, which was to cause terrible deprivation to the entire Brandenburg-Prussian population, began on 29 August 1756 when Frederick’s army marched into Saxony. For the first six months or so of the conflict life in the monarchy’s capital of Berlin was not affected.

Lehndorff continued his diary entries. In January 1757 he wrote: ‘People say that Amalie carries much of the blame for her grief. Often at night she curses the accident that she was born a Princess, and during the day lets it be known through her arrogance and her moods that she is a Royal Princess. The surge of the sea is not more excited than her behaviour. Good and bad, philosopher, worldling and churchy type, she is everything one after another; ten times a week she is satisfied and unsatisfied. This moody nature is naturally for her surroundings a terrible agony. She is at her best when everything is topsy-turvy.’<sup>1P</sup>

So what is really behind these observations? What caused Amalie’s grief? Her moods? Her anger? Why would she curse the accident she was born a Princess? Simple. Had she not been born a Princess she could have followed her heart with Trenck. She was angry and she was in mourning not only for a lost love, but because Trenck was also suffering terribly in her brother’s gaol.

The Queen Mother Sophie Dorothea was so infuriated with Amalie in late January that she forbade her daughter from appearing before her. As the row escalated Amalie was forbidden to eat out of her mother’s kitchen. As a consequence she was forced to visit others, or to occasionally get a chicken cooked in her own fireplace. Fortunately by May things had somewhat improved between the two adversaries and Amalie had begun ‘to come closer to her mother.’<sup>1P</sup> As 1757 rolled along the war took a more serious turn. Frederick was well aware that his monarchy was fighting for its very survival when in March he wrote to Amalie from Lockwitz: ‘think of the fatherland and remember that its defence is our first duty. There is only death or victory for us, one or the other is necessary... either on the summit of glory or annihilation.’<sup>23</sup>

Life continued along fairly normally in Berlin. In early June Lehndorff dined with Amalie at the Monbijou Palace. All the Hohenzollern Princesses were there. The hostess was very kind. She (Amalie) 'is really like many great men; nothing is mediocre with her, either she is heavenly or devilish.'<sup>1P</sup> Dark storm clouds continued to gather over Brandenburg-Prussia's horizon as the war gathered momentum. On 18 June the Austrian Field Marshal Daun won a devastating victory over Frederick's army at Kolin. Though the Austrians outnumbered him by almost two to one, the loss shattered his reputation of invincibility on the battlefield. How much longer could Frederick's tiny monarchy of just over three million people withstand the combined might of some forty-five million Russians, French, Austro-Hungarians, Saxons and Swedes?

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### ***Tragedy Within The Family***

Ten days after the terrible loss at Kolin the Queen Mother Sophie Dorothea died, on 28 June 1757. As what could be seen as a slight to her mother's memory Amalie allowed old Pöllnitz, a man Sophie Dorothea had banned from her Court for the previous seven years, to return and make the funeral arrangements. The Queen Mother's Court had been so large that more than one hundred people had lived off her favours. With her demise fear spread throughout her Court. Who would be granted pensions? Who would end up in poverty? In the month following her mother's death Amalie gave no official audiences. But life did not completely stand still. On 05 July she and the rest of the Court shuffled their rooms around within the palace.<sup>1Q</sup>

Within weeks of his mother's death Frederick dismissed his brother and heir apparent August William from his command after the Prince's army's disastrous retreat from Bohemia. The dismissal caused great bitterness within the Royal Family. Henry refused to assume command of August William's army, and both he and Ferdinand took August William's side. (The tragic story is told in Chapter I of Book II.) After Amalie became involved in the dispute. August William wrote to Henry's wife Wilhelmine in August: 'Amalie sent me an elegant letter just like a schoolmarm would instruct a boy over his duties to himself and his fatherland, I don't know from where she has found such ethics. She thinks I am sad, deeply worried and desperate. Nothing could be farther from the truth. I am in a very good mood, have a quiet conscience and only brood over protecting my reputation. For in no army in the world is the army leader so in danger as by us of losing his honour.'<sup>23</sup> Within twelve months of his dismissal August William became gravely ill. As soon as she heard the news, Amalie, after first picking up Dr Meckel, went straight to his side. The Prince who couldn't stand Meckel refused to see him, nor to speak to Amalie. Sadly the talented and formerly much loved Prince passed away on the 12 June 1758, aged just thirty-six.<sup>1X</sup>

As the Seven Years' War raged, Quedlinburg, like more and more cities and towns throughout Frederick's entire monarchy, was besieged by foreign armies demanding that the inhabitants pay enormous sums of money, otherwise the city would be burnt to the

ground. In late August Amalie told Lehndorff she had run out of money. Nothing had been sent to her from Quedlinburg and soon she would soon have to pay with paper.<sup>1R</sup> Thiébault says Amalie's income as Abbess of the Quedlinburg diocese could have amounted to 25 000 to 30 000 talers per year.<sup>12</sup> But obviously most of that went to cover expenses such as wages. However, for much of the Seven Years' War Quedlinburg was occupied by the French, so in this period not a penny went her way.

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### ***Escape To Magdeburg, 1757***

By October the very heart of Brandenburg-Prussia, its capital Berlin, was under threat! On the 14th the Minister of State, Count Finck, held long discussions with Princess Amalie. (With her brothers away at war Amalie took control of the Royal Court at Berlin, even though technically speaking the Queen Elisabeth Christine was higher in rank.) A decision was made. Should the enemy lay siege to the city the Royal Family would be evacuated. The next day it was discovered the enemy was just a day's march away. Though logic, says our busy chronicler Lehndorff, said the force could not be strong, the Berlin commander von Rochow with a not inconsiderable force of almost 5000 soldiers at his disposal lost his head and did nothing to protect the city. As the Royal Court made rapid preparations to leave Berlin Lehndorff found Amalie packing. She definitely had no regrets at leaving her usual comforts. (Of course not, she was going to Magdeburg where Trenck was imprisoned!) But she expressed concern for her servants whom she was unable to pay. No money had arrived from Quedlinburg since the French had occupied it. She even confessed to having just twenty-seven talers in her pocket.<sup>1R</sup>

As Frau von Troussel went to the castle to say good-bye to everyone before the Court's departure for Magdeburg she found Amalie resplendently dressed in her highest finery, adorned with all her diamonds, radiating the greatest joy, and amused at seeing the courtyard full of wagons which had been packed with baggage thrown from the castle windows.<sup>9</sup> Yet another important question must be answered. Why was Amalie so joyful in the face of such danger? And why was she so resplendently dressed? Had she lost her mind? No way! It is well known that in spite of her increasingly poor physical health she retained her enormous intellectual capacities to the very end of her life. That leaves the obvious. I believe Amalie's joy arose from the fact that she was heading for Magdeburg where Trenck was imprisoned!

The populace of Berlin was terrified as the enemy drew closer. An enemy trumpeter arrived with a ransom demand for 300 000 talers, otherwise the city would be plundered. Soon after they broke through the Cottbusser Gate. Frightened stiff, the Princesses and Court ladies threw themselves head over heels into their coaches and went like a storm to the palace. From there the Royal Family and their entourage first fled to the Spandau fortress, then from there made their way to Magdeburg 'the last secure fortress in the Monarchy,' where they stayed until the year's end. On 16 October, after the cowardly 5 000 or so defenders





18. Princess Amalie

had capitulated, an Austrian detachment of some 3500 men led by the Hungarian hussar general Count Andreas von Hadik occupied Berlin for a day or so.<sup>30</sup> A massive ransom of 215 000 talers was finally paid. Great depression reigned throughout the Royal Court when it was heard how small the enemy force had been.<sup>1R</sup>

Henry's wife Princess Wilhelmine recorded the Royal Court's journey to Magdeburg. At 9am on the 23rd they set out from the Spandau fortress near Berlin. The journey was excruciatingly slow, as the coaches could go no faster than the walking pace of the 300 infantrymen who escorted them. They arrived in Potsdam at 4pm, after which everyone chose a room in the State Palace to sleep in. The next morning at 8am they set out for Brandenburg, which turned out to be eight hours walking distance off. The Princesses stayed in private houses for two nights, as it was found necessary to rest the infantry for a day. Again the Court and its escort set out at 8am from Brandenburg, and arrived in Ziegesar at 2pm. Though the Court ladies were forced to sleep on straw on the ground, better arrangements were found for the Queen and the Princesses. The journey continued on the 27th when it took nine hours marching to reach Möckern by 2pm. Amalie had a terrible toothache. The next day at 1pm the column marched into Magdeburg.<sup>72A</sup>

Princess Wilhelmine's diary gives an excellent description of what everyday life at Court was like during the Seven Years' War. Most of the time things were very mundane, like waiting for an audience with the Queen. In Magdeburg Wilhelmine's life revolved around playing card games and changing her clothes. In the evening from time to time things were brightened up with a small concert. On 16 November Amalie, the Prince of Brunswick, Princess Wilhelmine and the Princess of Darmstadt visited the Berge monastery\*—an educational academy for young people. They were quite determined to get to their goal because when the coach couldn't go any further they alighted from it and proceeded on foot in the rain and the wind. They all laughed themselves silly over the monstrous looking wig that the Abbot Steinmetz was wearing.<sup>72A</sup>

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In times of crises Amalie always showed great courage. She again showed this by undertaking the dangerous trip to Trebatsch, near Breslau in the middle of Silesia, so she could help Frederick celebrate his birthday on 24 January 1758. She achieved her goal of trying to inject new heart and spirit into her brother. The Silesian ladies were ordered to make Amalie's Court as though she were the Queen. Knyphausen wrote to Lehndorff that the King treated Amalie during her visit with great attentiveness; he gave her 1000 talers to cover her travel expenses, and a diamond studded box possibly worth 2000 talers. Indeed 'the most affectionate and fiery lover would have had trouble outdoing this relationship.'<sup>1X</sup> Frederick told his reader de Catt that his sister's visit had given him his first joy in six months

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\* Interestingly Karl Albrecht von der Trenck, the brother of Amalie's lover Frederick studied there in the mid-1740s. It is doubtful he was still there in 1757. But who knows?<sup>74</sup>

of terrible warfare.<sup>31</sup> In September of the same year Amalie visited Frederick at Müllrose on the Saxon border.<sup>14</sup>

Also in January Amalie signed a request that money be provided to cover the salaries of the late Queen Mother Sophie Dorothea's massive Court, which had not yet been wound up. Attached were details of the Court's yearly budget of 17 525 talers, its staff, their respective titles and salaries in talers (in brackets): major-domo von Redern (2006); senior steward von Morien (1334); chamberlain von Hertefeld (1084); ladies-in-waiting: von Knesebeck\* (763), von Bredow, von Wacknitz and von Schulenburg (each 738); chambermaids: Rammen (555); Anderssohnen (387); Moritzen (307); Grupen (210); secret counsel Ferriet, engaged to read out aloud (300); court counsellor Hagemeister (690); valets: Rofe (830); Krüger (580); hairdresser Raufsin (300); personal tailor Hinnenberg (300); valets: Müller and Holwitz (both 212); clerk: Malo (230); footmen/messengers: Petzholtz (150); Helmbrecht (136); lackeys: Hagemeister, Lindow, Küster, Knorr, Putlitz and Böckler (each 92); porters: Baumann and Voigt (both 92); a lackey for lady-in-waiting Lefevre (90); a female lackey for Lady Sievert (42); pastrycook Meyer (200); chef Sonnenberg (430); kitchen clerk Hudemann (170); cooks: Heydecker (275); Krüger (250); Dietz (225); Mechow (150); kitchen servant Prüming (30); laundress Emmern (35); coal carrier Hintz (46); cellar master Grohe (157); waiters: Pröwer (121); Cornelius (95); wine-waiters: Schojahn (203); the boy Hafen (40); silver servants: Seebald (134); the lad Schritter (56); two women in the silver room (each 48); two bed making girls (each 53); personal coachman Klesche (124); outrider or fore-rider Wegener (69); five stall attendants (each 67); wood carriers: Günther (70); Zimmermann, (65); table linen attendant (80); two woodcutters (each 53); clothing washerwoman Stievern (50); table linen, etc. washerwoman Dühlingen (50); linen-room supervisor Adelern (50); wood supervisor Zückert (64).<sup>67</sup>

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As the war continued to rage Amalie wrote to her brother Frederick on 29 April 1758: 'My dear brother. You describe your misfortunes and your great exploits to me with the most touching expressions; you are heart-struck with the loss of those you have become attached to. I share your grief for the loss of so many loyal and courageous subjects.'<sup>69</sup> In a letter to Frederick written in September Amalie spoke of a prophecy about a skillful man who could only see and talk by inspiration. And that her prophet from the coffee-house would return to Schwedt with here sister.<sup>70</sup>

Since her schooldays Amalie had always had a fascination for biology as the following little anecdote confirms. On 21 February 1759 Princess Wilhelmine, after dining with Amalie, accompanied her on a visit to see Professor Meckel. They found him dissecting human parts. Although Wilhelmine was horrified, Amalie with a unique curiosity was delighted in

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\*This is most likely Eleanore Knesebeck, the loyal lady-in-waiting of Sophie Dorothea's mother, the so-called 'Princess of Ahlden'! By this time she must have been in her eighties.



looking at and touching every nerve and sinew.<sup>72C</sup>

Amalie visited her sister Sophie, the Margravine of Schwedt, in late March and must have been responsible for getting her to visit Berlin in mid-June. The Princess Wilhelmine, Henry's estranged wife, was very surprised to see Sophie, because it was the first time she had seen her in Berlin in the seven years she had lived there. In the same month Herr von Rauschenblat was serving as a cavalier in Amalie's Court.<sup>72</sup> Amalie could be very generous to people when she thought they deserved it. One such example follows. On 08 July 1759 as her chief stewardess Frau von Maupertuis made her way to Basil to meet her dying husband Amalie gave her a very beautiful baguette-shaped diamond and a gift of 2000 French écus.<sup>72B</sup> (The écus was a gold or silver coin equivalent in value to a taler. So Amalie gave her around two years salary in coins as a gift, plus the diamond!) Lehdorff continued to tattle on in his diary about Court gossip and the various members of the Royal Family. In August he penned: Amalie 'is really the shrewdest woman that I know. She always fits herself into the circumstances. She never appears like she really is. Instead she is as though in a mask and conceals her arrogance and her vanity behind the most courteous and most obliging nature.'<sup>1T</sup>

Two years into the Seven Years' War Brandenburg-Prussia sat on the precipice. And the more desperate things got, the more depressing Frederick's letters became. His message was clear; he suspected the end was near, and was even contemplating suicide. On 14 October 1758 he was dealt two severe, shattering body-blows. The Austrians beat him in battle at Hochkirch and his beloved sister Wilhelmine died after a long illness. The war again forced the Royal Family to flee to Magdeburg for three months in 1759. The massive entourage of more than 100 coaches and wagons left Berlin at 9am on 13 August after Count Finck received a desperate letter from the King. The day before his army had been decimated at Kunersdorf barely a 100 kilometres or so east of Berlin. He had no troops left to defend his capital: 'My infantry is cut down, the cavalry is fully eliminated, I don't have more than 3000 men. Save the Royal House!'<sup>1T</sup>

On 21 August at 9am Princess Wilhelmine, writing in her diary, says that both she and Amalie visited Fort l'Etville (also called Fort Berge(n)) where the vice Governor, the hereditary Prince of Hesse, showed them around. Colonel Balbi illuminated all the galleries (walk ways) for them so they could see their way around the dark interior. The air was very stuffy underground. Later on they visited the casemates where General Walrave was kept.<sup>72D</sup> What I find amazing about this diary entry is that Wilhelmine admits visiting General Walrave's casemate. He was probably the most important and senior prisoner in Magdeburg. It is also known she and the other Princesses while in Magdeburg also visited other prisoners. But there is no mention of Trenck. But why not? And if she, or Amalie alone, did visit him why was his name not mentioned in her diary? The answer is obvious. The family scandal of 1744-45, the lover affair between Princess Amalie and Trenck was a taboo subject and had to remain suppressed.

The critical military situation yet again forced the Royal Family to take refuge in Magdeburg between March 1760 and August 1762. By this time the whole monarchy was

almost completely exhausted. Poverty and hunger had worn down the populace. Hundreds of thousands of people were dead and a similar number had suffered terrible, crippling wounds. Obviously Princess Wilhelmine's entry in her diary, dated 22 February 1760, mentioning that the Russians were already in Schwedt—barely eighty kilometres north-east of Berlin—gives the reason for the Royal Family's evacuation to Magdeburg in March.

On 07 May Amalie and Wilhelmine, Prince Henry's wife, dined with the Austrian general Türheim who was being held prisoner in Magdeburg. In early June Wilhelmine wrote in her diary she had heard Amalie had received a yearly payment of more than 50 000 écus (French gold or silver coins) from the Quedlinburg diocese.<sup>72E</sup> However, during most of the Seven Years' War she probably received nothing. It has been said that necessity is the mother of invention. Sometime around the middle of the year Amalie, presumably before she received the money from Quedlinburg, was so short of cash that she came up with the great idea of printing her own! And she got really annoyed when her brother King Frederick banned her from carrying out her ingenious plan.<sup>1W</sup> Around this time she was also having some kind of trouble with one of her feet.<sup>32</sup>

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### ***Berlin Pillaged Again***

On 03 October 1760 a Russian army of some 20 000 men, led by General Count Gottlob Tottleben and Tschernyschew, advanced on Berlin. The defence of the city was organized by Seydlitz and Field Marshal John von Lehwaldt (most likely a relative of Frederick von der Trenck), who really only had three weak grenadier battalions and forty hussars at their disposal. Several days later the already large Russian strike force was strengthened by 15 000 Austrians led by General von Lasch (or possibly Field Marshal von Lacy). Tottleben demanded the city pay nine (more likely four) million talers, or he would order his artillery to throw fireballs on the city before his army plundered it.<sup>32</sup> The enemy smashed its way into Berlin on 08 October, and occupied it for four days. An important Berlin businessman named Gotzkowsky explained that no one knew about the secret departure of the defending troops.<sup>33</sup> The massive Brandenburg-Prussian arsenal in Unter den Linden was sacked. The gunpowder factory was blown up, the cannon foundry was destroyed and 5000 prisoners were taken. After the Russian's failed to find any silver plate in Queen Elisabeth Christine's Schönhausen Palace they tortured her servants, and then systematically set about tearing apart carpets and curtains, and smashing porcelain and furniture. All of King's coaches in the Royal stables were smashed to pieces. In the Charlottenburg Palace the beautiful antique collection the King had bought for an enormous sum from Cardinal von Polignac was smashed to pieces; then the palace was left in ruins.<sup>34</sup>

The enemy left Berlin as the King's army approached but not before they had extracted credit contributions amounting to 2 000 000 talers. Interestingly, the residents of Berlin themselves paid nothing. Sometime after the war ended King Frederick paid off the debt!<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile a Swedish army was advancing in the Ückermark not much more than 100

kilometres north of Berlin. Just 130 kilometres to the east, at Landsberg on the Warthe River, the main Russian army was massing. And fifty kilometres to the south the Imperial army was at Treuenbreitzen. How much longer could the enemy be kept at bay? As the enemy closed in on Brandenburg, the very heart of the monarchy, almost nowhere apart from perhaps the virtually impregnable fortress of Magdeburg was safe from enemy forays.

In desperate times morale has to be kept up on the home front. Amalie knew this to be so, otherwise all could be lost under a cloud of depression. So in an attempt to raise the spirits of those around her, in April 1761 she decided to give a party where she insisted that the men should come dressed as women, and the women as men. The Princes' of Nassau and Wrede both lost their cool over their ridiculous looking attire. Geuder looked absurd dressed up as a maid. Amalie wore a priest's outfit. After supper the music began to play, but the intended dance soon fizzled out and instead everyone played cards.<sup>35</sup>

No one can say Amalie had no sense of humour. Late in 1760 at a banquet given by one of the Princesses (most likely August William's wife) as a form of protest, or maybe just for a laugh, she arrived with her own dinner after hearing in advance that Marshal Kraut had struck two courses off the menu.<sup>35</sup> Around this time whenever Amalie had a supper party she always contrived to sit the widow Bonin and Frau von Troussel at the same table. Whenever the widow lost even a single game she used to burst into tears. This so amused Amalie's fancy that she always encouraged her 'partner in crime' to make sure she beat the widow.<sup>9</sup> One evening in October Lehdorff dined with Amalie and found her in excellent spirits. Though there was a war on obviously not everything was rationed all the time, as Amalie and her guests managed to eat some 200 oysters between them!

By late 1761—after more than five years of total war—the fate Brandenburg-Prussia seemed decided, for she was almost completely exhausted. And it appeared only a matter of time before its enemies would strike the final, fatal body-blow. Then a miracle, a sudden ray of hope, happened! In late January 1762 the Russian Czarina Elizabeth died. She had been personally embittered against King Frederick and had sworn his ruin. The Russians had already taken control of Prussia, Pomerania, Kolberg, and a part of the New Mark. With its considerable army in Silesia it could have struck the fatal blow within a few months.<sup>32</sup> The new Czar Peter III almost immediately withdrew his troops from the Seven Years' War.

Marauding enemy troops had severely damaged most of the towns and cities throughout the whole of Brandenburg-Prussia. As the Royal Family prepared to return to Berlin after more than two years of living within the secure walls of Magdeburg, on 30 June 1762 Amalie wrote a compassionate letter in support of a member of the Royal Household<sup>71</sup>:

'Much esteemed Chamber President. The Equerry (the officer in charge of the enormous Royal stables) Schwerin has complained to me that our Royal house that he has lived in for twenty-four years in Berlin has been totally ruined by the Russians. Though during this long time he has constantly maintained it, the present rising prices in all things is so great that it would become a burden for him to again take on the repairs. Because he goes to

Berlin on account of his work, he has requested me to bring to your esteemed attention whether it would not be possible that such expenses could be done at the expense of the Chamber, which because it is a Royal house is most proper. It would be a special favour if you could find a way to do this for me, which I could reciprocate once I find the opportunity, and it would please me if I could serve you again. I am with much respect your most affectionate friend.  
Amélie.'

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As the war began to lose its intensity and fierceness King Frederick's spirits slowly but surely recovered. In November he wrote a cheeky letter to Amalie: 'You who have a relationship to heaven that I do not have. You can know how your eternal father-in-law favours or works against us. I, poor mortal, who doesn't even know a dog in paradise...' <sup>36</sup> Finally, after seemingly going on forever, in February 1763 the treaty of Hubertusburg ended the Seven Years' War.

In April Frederick dined with Amalie in Berlin, and gave her 4000 talers and a gold box studded with diamonds. That month Amalie had an accident, which somehow she feared might happen. Out of concern for his sister's health Frederick stayed in Berlin for the next three weeks and often visited her as her condition worsened. Dr Meckel's advice was to send Amalie to a spa. In May Lehndorff jotted in his diary that Amalie 'whose health is always unstable travels to Aachen.' On the way she stayed for three days in Potsdam where she was feted by the King. Frederick gave her 4000 Brandenburg talers to supplement the 10 000 old talers she already had. Lehndorff added that from the onset of her illness Amalie had become very miserly. <sup>1W</sup> While staying in Aachen Amalie met Mozart (1756-91) in 1763. The six-year-old child prodigy had begun his musical career at the age of four and was already touring the European Courts. Amalie invited his father to bring him to Berlin. His father curtly wrote: 'She has no money; if the kisses that she gave my children, especially to the master Wolfgang (Amadeus), were pure louis d'or (gold coins) we would be happy enough.' <sup>73</sup>

Lehndorff frequently visited Amalie. On one occasion he discovered her sitting at her writing desk surrounded by books on physics and metaphysics, human limbs she had dissected, while she wrote over politics. One day she lived in splendour in magnificently furnished rooms, the next day she lived in a small whitewashed room with a wooden stool and table, prepared her own food in the fireplace and clothed herself like a pauper. Lehndorff says Amalie's sister Ulrike asked him whether Amalie had born a child and thereafter dismembered it and burnt the body in a fireplace. Such talk he says was slanderous. She loved children and had taken many of them off the streets to have them properly raised. Amalie always had children around her, and indeed she handled them so lovingly that people asserted they could be her own.\* And where did Lehndorff get his insight? He says he got

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\*I emphatically believe Amalie had a child to Trenck. So did Ulrike, although her thoughts about dissection and burning are malicious. See Chapters III and IV of this Book for details .

to know about the young Jewish, negro and peasant children himself.<sup>1X</sup> Until infirmity crippled her hands Amalie used to make Frederick's shirts.<sup>37</sup>

Countess Voss says Amalie was very spiteful, much feared and caused distress and trouble for others.<sup>3</sup> Certainly her lack of tact often caused embarrassment. Of all the Hohenzollern siblings, it was Amalie who bore the greatest similarity to Frederick. Both had spirited and shrewd minds and as Amalie grew older she also picked up his sarcastic manner, although in her youth she had been remarkable for avoiding whatever could disoblige.<sup>38</sup> However Amalie had good reason for becoming caustic. The sudden enforced ending of her affair with Trenck—made worse still by his terrible decade spent chained up like a dog in her brother's gaols—had to make her sour and embittered!

That Amalie's health began to deteriorate even before she had turned forty is not surprising. Only a miracle enabled her father Frederick William I to survive through his forties before he expired, aged just fifty-one. Four of Amalie's siblings died in the first two years of life. August William died when thirty-five, and her sisters Wilhelmine and Sophie died in their forties. Inbreeding had made most of the Hohenzollerns a sickly lot. Countess Camas wrote to King Frederick in October 1764: 'Your Majesty will be painfully affected when you again see Princess Amalie, who has so terribly changed. What is the point of all the baths one finds at the end of the world?'<sup>23</sup> The Countess is referring to Amalie's stay in the cure resort town of Aachen between June 1763 and September 1764.<sup>39</sup> At some stage Amalie also took at least one cure in the town of Spa.

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### ***The Unter den Linden Palace***

Amalie's first palace was at 7 Unter den Linden.\* It was bought on 07 November 1764 from a Herr von Pieverling for some 34 000 talers. The thirty-year-old building, originally built for the senior Court official Möhler, was remodelled by Boumann before the Princess moved in. Amalie lived year-round in Unter den Linden until early 1772 when she bought a palace at 102 Wilhelmstrasse (William Street). From then on she lived in her new palace during the warmer months of the year. Between Easter 1782 and her death on 30 March 1787 most of the Unter den Linden Palace, apart from a few rooms, was rented out for 750 talers a year to the Royal Sardinian Ambassador Herr Count von Fontana.<sup>66</sup>

Parrots were one of Amalie's passions—a passion passed down through the generations on the Stuart side of her family, originating in the time of Mary Queen of Scots. Amalie also liked pug dogs. Sometime in 1766 she told her brother Henry about a small dog she would love to have, but which cost too much. The Prince told Lehndorff to buy it and to send it to her. In mid-1767, after dining with Amalie, Lehndorff says later on in the evening she 'gave a wonderful concert in her organ auditorium.'<sup>40A</sup>

That year Countess Voss wrote in her diary that Amalie's character is well known. If

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\*In 1936 the house numbers in Unter den Linden were changed. The Russian Embassy now occupies the site.

she should ever discover Crown Prince Frederick William's affair, she of all people would cause endless embarrassment.<sup>35</sup> Two years later the Prince divorced his wife and soon after married Princess Friederike Louisa of Hessen-Darmstadt. The Princess' mother received a flood of letters, including one from Amalie, warning her of the 'snake-pit' awaiting her daughter in Berlin: 'I suffer that I must disclose that sort of thing to you... Allow me Madam a moment to draw a breath. I have no other interest in revealing all this awful mystery than to protect someone (the daughter) who is dear to you from unhappiness. I cannot possibly find pleasure in shouting from the roof tops the misdeeds of my nearest relatives. I feel Madam that I begin to forfeit your good opinion in speaking so openly. You will think that I have become quite malicious, that I say nothing good about anyone, but to say the truth and begun by me: the whole store is worth nothing!'<sup>23A</sup>

Amalie could also be generous with her praise. She wrote a glowing description of Frau von Morrien, the stewardess of Princess Elisabeth, Frederick William's first wife: 'Her character had never deserted her, the most cunning spitefulness (of others) could also not find the slightest hold on her; she has experienced during the last four years (the length of the Princess' marriage) a thousand times morose and a thousand fold grief, and she has endured it with steadfastness and an astonishing strength of spirit, without ever the slightest complaint passing out of her mouth. She is very competent, gives excellent advice' and 'possesses a keenness of eye that enabled her to see through the most veiled character. In short, she is a "treasure."<sup>41</sup>

Prince Henry nicknamed his sister Amalie 'the evil fairy.' Somewhere around 1769 when she was in her mid-forties he wrote: 'What concerns a certain Abbess, the seclusion in which she lives and her bodily frailty has had a great influence on her mind. She has a good heart but her changeable mood and her judgement is seldom correct; one conceals from her all that which could disturb her, although she is very inquisitive.'<sup>23</sup>

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The senior positions in Amalie's Court at the beginning of 1770 were held by Frau Maupertuis, two ladies-in-waiting, the Fräuleins von Podewils and von Hertefeld, a chamberlain and two pages. Around this time she gave a banquet perhaps once a month. In April Amalie's deep loved friend Fräulein von Hertefeld died of consumption and Frederick tried to console his sister with an elegy.<sup>14</sup> It was not until December that the now vacant position was filled by Fräulein von Zerst, who served in the Princess' Court until her mistress died some sixteen years later. Sadly, though Amalie was only in her mid-forties, her health could at best be described as fragile. In August, Frederick wrote to his sister Ulrike, and described her tragic condition: 'Amalie bears her lot with great steadfastness, and there are even days on which her good moods overcome and carry away her grief. Certainly everyone who knows her must affectionately love her.'<sup>54</sup>

In October Amalie's brother Ferdinand became critically ill. Though her life 'only hangs by a thread,' wrote Lehndorff in his diary, she immediately went to his side.<sup>40B</sup> The following



month Amalie visited Frederick at his Sanssouci Palace in Potsdam. Over the Christmas period he gave her 6000 talers. Sadly Amalie's health deteriorated so rapidly that by May 1771 she threatened to breakdown completely. Soon after she again visited Potsdam where Frederick overwhelmed her with friendliness and gave her 6000 talers and a porcelain table service. Frederick said to her: 'The remaining part of the King's house pleasures itself in winter, you and I in summer.'

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### ***The Wilhelmstrasse Palace***

On 14 January 1772 Amalie bought her second palace at 102 Wilhelmstrasse from William Adolph von Hagen, who had inherited it from the former State Minister Baron von Hagen, for 21 500 talers in gold friedrichs d'or (coins). In October of the following year she purchased some land next door from the gardener John Jacob Nicola for 2000 talers in courant, and turned it into a sprawling, magnificent English garden. Two months later the palace's insurance policy, valued at 40 000 talers, was cancelled.

The history of this palace from when it was built in 1738-39 by the French emigré Baron Vernezobre de Laurieux until its annihilation by Allied bombing towards the end of World War II reads like a colourful tapestry of Berlin life. This French-style palace at 102 Wilhelmstrasse, opposite the corner of Kochstrasse, was considered one of the most beautiful and important buildings in all Berlin. The Baron, who first arrived in Berlin in 1714, brought with him the great wealth he had acquired—by means that at best were considered to be shifty—working in the banking and paper industries in Paris. From 1724 onwards he began buying up estates in Brandenburg. He established the first *Parchent* (thick woollen cloth) factory in the monarchy, and built other factories, including an iron forge, a crepe mill and a wire factory. In 1730 Baron Vernezobre got himself out of favour with King Frederick William I by giving Crown Prince Frederick monetary advances right up to the time of his failed escape bid in August. Though he was placed under house arrest the storm eventually passed him by, and unlike Frederick's unfortunate accomplice von Katte his head remained on his shoulders.

In November 1736 the King, who liked his army officers to marry into rich families, let Vernezobre know his wish that Captain von Forcade marry one of his daughters. Of course such a 'request' from Frederick William was the same as a Royal Command, and subjects who did not carry out his wishes placed themselves in great danger. The clever, slippery Baron, though submissive towards his King, still maintained the line that his daughters did not want to marry the captain. To calm his Majesty down Vernezobre agreed to build a palace in the Berlin suburb of Friedrichsstadt, at 102 Wilhelmstrasse. This offer was in line with the King's policy of encouraging his generals, high officials and wealthy merchants to build magnificent private dwellings in Berlin by granting them land and giving them the building materials they needed. The Baron's request that his daughter be able to choose a husband also acceptable to his Majesty was also allowed. The wealthy Baron Vernezobre,

who only lived in his Wilhelmstrasse palace in summer, as in winter he lived in his heated house in the Burgstrasse, died in 1753.

The palace lay vacant for most of the next decade until late 1763. At that time the Turkish envoy Achmet Resmi Effendi, together with his long caravan, made his way to Berlin. Huge crowds flocked to see the Asiatic curiosities as they passed through Breslau in Silesia. By early November Effendi's entourage, escorted by one hundred cavalry led by two captains, three lieutenants and a cornet, arrived in Berlin and made its way to the Vernezobre Palace. The envoy's entourage which accompanied him on his way from the palace to his first audience with King Frederick was impressive. First came fifty infantrymen led by a captain and a lieutenant. Next came the King's equerry and his assistants, the envoy's equerry, two riflemen of the Sultan's Horse, the envoy's first chamberlain and five servants, and the legation's secretary. Next came the Royal state coach carrying the envoy, the Court translator and the King's representative, alongside which walked servants in pairs. They were followed by fourteen of the envoy's lackeys, and thirty infantrymen led by a lieutenant.

A week later Effendi presented some magnificent gifts to King Frederick including: gold coated armour and a breastplate, both bedecked with precious stones; a pair of massive golden stirrups covered in rubies, diamonds, and emeralds; a saddle inlaid with precious jewels; precious Persian and Indian carpets; a magnificent scarlet tent; and superb Indian linens.

During his seven months or so in Berlin Effendi made some interesting observations: The houses, mostly three stories high, had underground cellars to help even out the extremes of winter cold and summer heat. As for King Frederick, his entire thoughts were focused on expanding his monarchy and the enlarging his own fame. 'The Prussian soldiers were treated worse than prisoners being in a constant state of anaesthesia and bewilderment with a musket in the hand, an ammunition bag at the side, little in the stomach, much on the back, in constant slavery.'<sup>42</sup>

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In 1769 the Vernezobre Palace was bought at auction by the State Minister Baron von Hagen for 12 600 talers. But it did not stay in his hands for long. In mid-January 1772 Amalie, who adored and fell in love with its wonderful French-style architecture, bought it. Four months later her sister Charlotte wrote: 'Amalie has found much pleasure in furnishing her new house herself. It is roomier than the other. She is wholly outside of the family and too far back (from it).'23

Amalie decorated the palace with theme rooms, like a marble room and two green rooms. The little red room's wallpaper and curtains were both made from crimson red damask, a richly-figured woven material probably made of silk. Four chairs were covered in the same material. A large glass and bronze chandelier dominated the centre of the room. Other furnishings included two painted chests of drawers with white marble panels, a green screen with sculptured wooden surrounds (behind which someone could get changed) and

a card table with stools and eight candle holders of blue glass to illuminate the players' cards. A portrait of Amalie's brother Frederick took pride of place on the wall, while a superb porcelain piece of her famous brother on horseback further enhanced the room's ambiance. Many large and small *Trumeaux* (mirrors usually placed between two windows) featured heavily throughout Amalie's two palaces with more than a dozen in Wilhelmstrasse and some twenty-five in Unter den Linden. The palaces also featured twenty-five old dessert mirrors and magnificent mahogany tables and chests of drawers. In her will Amalie left her brother Henry eight superb chandeliers, and quite incredibly seventeen marble tables, which when scattered throughout the rooms of her palaces must have added considerably to their magnificence.

In 1786 Nicholai<sup>10</sup> brilliantly and in detail described Berlin and all its important buildings. He wrote that Amalie's Wilhelmstrasse palace was exquisitely well built. Not only were the trimmings on its walls and ceilings gilded in gold leaf, but it was also beautifully furnished. Dozens of magnificent, original paintings hung everywhere. In a bedroom hung a portrait of King Frederick II by Spahn. In the audience room hung a life-sized portrait of King Frederick William I by his brilliant Court painter Pesne.\* The walls of Amalie's bedroom were covered by more than a dozen portraits featuring mainly her siblings and father. In one first storey room hung another dozen or so portraits. In one of the green rooms, which featured green damask wallpaper and curtains, hung eight or so more. The superb portraits adorning the walls of Amalie's living-room would have held their own anywhere. They included the now famous Pesne painting of Crown Prince Frederick leading his beautiful sister Wilhelmine by the hand, as toddlers; Queen Sophie Charlotte; a Prince of Orange as a child by Pesne; a lady and gentleman clothed as pilgrims by Pesne; Frau von Maupertuis by A. Graf; a country scene by Molonär; the battle of the Amazonian Queen Penthesilea with the Greeks near Troy; two small landscapes by Pölenburg; two paintings of Vanloo's children painted by himself; Bacchus and Ariadne; two landscapes by Griffier; a landscape by du Bois; two large landscapes by du Bois, in which Pesne painted in the figures; many portraits of the Royal Family by Pesne, Vanloo and others...

In her organ room Amalie's beloved, beautiful organ by Marks, with a sixteen foot main register, and a grand piano took pride of place. There were also nine sheet music stands. A glass chandelier with bronze arms hung from the ceiling, while four bronze chandeliers hung off the walls. Two large wall mirrors made the room look larger than it was. There were also four foot blankets which the Court ladies used to augment the palace's notoriously inadequate heating system during the cold Berlin winters. Other musical instruments were also scattered throughout the rest of the Wilhelmstrasse palace. Another grand piano adorned the marble room. A piano-forte, an early type of piano, sat in one of the green rooms. A Klavier piano, probably an improved version of a pianoforte, sat in the

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\* Antoine Pesne, born in Paris in 1683, was the Court painter at Berlin for almost fifty years. In that time he taught more than forty students. He died in 1757.

other green room. In other rooms were a viola da gamba and three lutes, one of which was quite old and sharp sounding.

Amalie's dining-table was adorned with her everyday white porcelain set of twenty plates, a sugar bowl and spoon, a salad bowl and a mustard pot. For special occasions her porcelain dessert service of six dozen plates, two large and two small turrines and four dozen knives and forks, was used. After dinner, tea and coffee would have been served from her blue and white porcelain coffee service made up of three pots for coffee, milk and a tea, a tea container, a sugar bowl, a rinsing bowl and twelve cups.<sup>66</sup>

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Almost two hundred years after Baron Vernezobre built his beautiful palace it fell under an evil, black shadow when the dreaded SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler, his staff, the Security Service (SD) of the SS and the Secret State Police moved in next door.<sup>43</sup> (In the block now bounded by Niederkirchnerstrasse, Wilhelmstrasse and Anhalterstrasse.) In 1934 the Security Service of the SS with Reinhard Heydrich as its head moved into the Prince Albrecht Palace\* at 102 Wilhelmstrasse. (Prince Albrecht of Prussia, the son of Frederick William III, lived in the palace from 1830 until his death in 1872.) Five years later the newly formed Reichs Security Main Office, a merging of the Gestapo, the Criminal Police and the SD, with at first Heydrich and later Ernst Kaltenbrunner as its director, worked there.

In 1942 the RSMO's central administration had around 3400 employees, of which 1500 of them worked on the Prince Albrecht land, while a further 500 worked in the immediate vicinity. Some RSMO officials and department heads became commanders of the 'Special Units' who killed millions of people in Poland and Russia. The most notorious commander was Adolf Eichmann, the chief organizer of the mass deportation of Jews from all over Europe to the extermination camps. Kaltenbrunner was sentenced to death during the Nuremberg War Trials in 1946. Eichmann, kidnapped from Argentina by the Israeli secret service in 1960, was tried and executed in Jerusalem in June 1962.

Saturation bombing of Berlin's inner city began in November 1943. In April and May 1944 the Prince Albrecht Palace was heavily bombed. Five years later in April 1949 the palace was demolished without any attempt being made to salvage any of its still clearly recognizable splendour. And sadly the beautiful French-style palace, a Berlin icon for more than two centuries, was no more.

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### ***Musician, Composer, Collector, Benefactor***

While still a child, Amalie virtually mastered the spinet, a small harpsichord. In her teens the Royal lautist Baron taught her the lute, while the cathedral organist Hayne taught her to play the *General-basslehre*, and the piano. She became a brilliant pianist. Later on she learnt to play the organ, the violin, the flute and could also sing. Where did Amalie get her musical talent from? From her grandmother Queen Sophie Charlotte of Prussia, the daughter of

Duke Ernest Augustus of Hanover, who was taught musicianship by the most notable Italian composer of her time, Agostino Steffani. In a time when it was almost unheard of among the nobility, she became an excellent harpsichordist who could also sing.

Amazingly both Amalie and her grandmother began studying counterpoint composition at thirty-four years of age. Amalie was taught by John Philip Kirnberger. Born in Saalfeld in Thüringen and christened on the 24 April 1724, Kirnberger first studied the organ in Gräfenroda with Kellner when still quite young. In 1738 he began violin lessons with Meil of Sonderhausen and at the same time the Court organist Gerber taught him Bach's fugues. For the next several years he studied with Johann Sebastian Bach and then played as a clavierist at the Courts of several minor Princes. In 1750 he studied violin under Zickler in Dresden for a year before taking up the post as a violinist in King Frederick's orchestra in Potsdam for three years.

Kirnberger then, depending upon which historian you believe, worked for Amalie's brother Henry in Rheinsberg or for her sister Sophie's husband, the Margrave of Schwedt. Clearly Amalie could have met Kirnberger as early as 1751 in Potsdam. She also would have seen him in either Schwedt or Rheinsberg. Intriguingly, in December 1755 Amalie began to study Kirnberger's first instrument the organ! In 1758 Kirnberger joined Amalie's Court and remained in her employ until his death twenty-five years later. As far as musical taste was concerned, Kirnberger and Amalie were as alike as two peas in a pod. They both studied the old masters such as Hasler and zealously stuck to strict counterpoint methods, rejecting all the modern techniques. Amalie studied music composition diligently and seriously and was always eager to learn new methods. Eva Wutta found twenty-six notes, written in German, which the Princess sent to Kirnberger. Though she often asked her teacher's opinion, she did not always accept it. His praise delighted her. The notes show Amalie as the motivator who got Kirnberger to publish his music theories. She always supported him when he was severely attacked by his contemporaries, as he so often was. Their mutual respect was such that the teacher-student role often became blurred. One undated note Amalie sent to Kirnberger mentions her struggle against poor health: 'I study diligently, without becoming tired, but my health does not always allow it.'<sup>8</sup>

As a sign of respect for Kirnberger, and P.E. Bach who Amalie also knew, portraits of both men by Lisiewsky took pride of place in her music room in her Wilhelmstrasse palace. Interestingly a relative of Kirnberger apparently married Amalie's chef, Wegner. Though no proof exists I believe it to be highly likely Amalie and Kirnberger were lovers. Kirnberger died on 26 July 1783.

Amalie was a generous benefactor to talented musicians and students alike. Over many decades, and from her own purse, she provided the income for two musicians, Schaffrath and Kirnberger which enabled them to pursue their music careers. She gave K.W. Ramler, the professor of the cadet corps who had a yearly salary of 144 talers, 100 talers for his poem the *Passions-Oratorium*. When the writer Sulzer became ill and could only eat fruit, she made sure he received the best and rarest fruit from Sanssouci. She also loved to teach

young girls foreign languages, and took great delight in seeing the progress they made.<sup>47</sup> In 1751 after the singer Benedetta Molteni, contrary to a Court rule, married the composer J.F. Agricola, King Frederick punished them by reducing their joint yearly salary to 1000 talers. In 1774 after Agricola died the King dismissed his wife even though she could sing as well as ever. Sadly, Amalie's compassionate plea on behalf of the singer that she be retained fell on deaf ears. Amalie was the patron of John Henry Victor Rofe who became the organist in the main church of Quedlinburg.<sup>29</sup> In 1767 Philipp Emanuel Bach, a son of Johann Sebastian, became the music director of the five principal Protestant churches of Hamburg. As he left Berlin where he had lived for some twenty-five years to take up his new post Amalie graciously appointed him as her retiring music director.<sup>44</sup>

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When Amalie's grandmother Queen Sophie Charlotte died her music collection worth 'a ton of gold' was put into the Royal Library.<sup>45</sup> Some thirty-five years later, after becoming King in May 1740, Frederick placed the superb collection in Amalie's capable care. Yet years before this bequest, when just eleven years old, she had begun her own collection by frequently sending her music teacher Gottlieb Hayne to auctions to buy music scores. Buying rare, original music scores became Amalie's passion, and it often put her heavily into debt. The music collections of both Schaffrath, who died in 1763, and Kirnberger became incorporated into Amalie's already valuable library to form what was to be known as the *Amalien Bibliothek*. The library finally included 600 volumes of theoretical and practical masterworks and rare musical scores, such as the complete works of J.S. Bach and the chapel master Graun, works of Händel, P.E. Bach, Praetorius and many others, all of which had been knowingly collected and held in trust for posterity.

As a patron, a protectress and an authority in both music and literature Amalie generously made her library in her Wilhelmstrasse Palace readily accessible to both students and scholars alike. While serving as the Austrian envoy to Berlin between 1771-73 Baron Gottfried van Swieten copied many unique works he found in her library. After his return to Vienna he took on a musical assistant called Mozart who worked at his side for many years. The influence of the Berlin sourced musical works on Mozart's last religious works is evidence of the importance of Amalie's library.<sup>8</sup>

Amalie also collected 2860 beautifully bound books, including the best scientific and artistic books of her time. Written in French, Italian, English and German their content covered history, travel, geography, poetry, science, philosophy and theology. That Amalie used her books is testified to by the fact that the margins of almost all her books were filled with her notes. Clearly she was well-read. Indeed, it is known she studied with a rare enthusiasm for as long as she lived. Upon her death her library was valued at over 40 000 talers, a princely sum indeed. She bequeathed her library to the *Joachimsthal Gymnasium* school where it became historically important as the focal point for the rediscovery of Bach's works in the early nineteenth century. It was also used as a fundamental information source



for Forkel's biography on J.S. Bach (1802) and for the Berliner Singakademie established by Fasch and Zelter. The Joachimsthal Gymnasium was a school with many famous professors on its staff. By the late 1770s its higher classes taught to the academic level of a university. The head of its school board was the Royal State Minister Baron von Zedlitz.

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Amalie composed music for religious texts and hymns with up to four voice parts, chamber music for flute and harpsichord, violin and viola, and for Court masquerades. Her letters infer she was often asked to write military marches for special occasions and that she mostly fulfilled those requests. Four of her military marches are available on a cassette.<sup>48</sup> Most of Amalie's compositions have been lost to posterity because she preserved little of her own works. All that is left is what other musicians themselves copied down. In 1790 Gerber wrote a contemporary view of her in a biography of composers: 'She took her counterpoint composition 'so far that she earned the right to be counted as a master of art.' Proof is her ability to 'argue with the great Graun over the laurels' of her music set to Ramler's *Death of Jesus*. This work shows her knowledge of 'each secret of the double counterpoint and the fuge, and of each aid of the trained music professors. A violin trio movement also proved her deep knowledge' of 'instrumental movements. With this great knowledge of composition, she combined above all in the early years an exceptional skill on the piano.'<sup>49</sup>

J.G. Naumann, in the 1780s one of the leading music personalities in Europe and the Dresden Music Director, also wrote about Amalie's choral work the *Death of Jesus*: 'It deserves that it should be famous,' for it 'shames many compositions of the profession.' The choral work is 'a counterpoint masterwork,' and therefore it is unsuitable 'to describe her as an amateur.'<sup>29</sup> In 1988 Edmund Wächter wrote on a music cassette that many of Amalie's predominantly sacred works show her to be the first German woman to compose at a professional level.<sup>50</sup> Had she lived in the late twentieth century with her musical ability and technical knowledge she would have probably become a music professor or a concert pianist.

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### ***Everyday Life***

In April 1772 a new dispute broke out between Amalie and her brother Henry as they travelled with their sisters Charlotte and Ulrike to their father's former hunting lodge at Wusterhausen. Amalie said something about her mother. Henry reacted angrily, and the two siblings swore never to see one another again. A couple of months later Amalie visited Potsdam. As the rest of the Royal Family turned against her her brother King Frederick not only protected her but gave her 6000 talers on her departure.<sup>40C</sup>

Letters exchanged between the Hohenzollern siblings were almost always exceedingly polite. Amalie's letter to her sister Charlotte in March 1773 was no exception: 'It is time I believe to remind you that I still exist and that you have a sister in the world who affectionately

loves you and who is wholeheartedly interested in everything that affects you my dear sister, I take the opportunity to be the first to congratulate you on your birthday. I pray you stay in good health and that your kind cheerfulness and your charming humour may stay with you until old age, as I for a long time remember them. Further still, all the luck and all the contentedness that one in the world can enjoy and never shall a wish stay unfulfilled, for you deserve everything.<sup>751</sup>

Each Christmas time King Frederick quite often handed out large sums of money to his siblings, and occasionally to some of his generals. In December 1773, amongst other gifts he handed out, he gave Henry 12 000 talers and Amalie 5 000 talers.<sup>40D</sup>

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### ***Deteriorating Health, Vital Mind***

For the last twenty years of her life Amalie's health progressively deteriorated. In late November 1775 her right eye became seriously inflamed.<sup>68</sup> The famous eye specialist Sirus, under the supervision of Dr Mutzelius, undertook the medical treatment. To ensure her good eye remained healthy she was compelled to remain in a dark room and not allowed to do anything. By the year's end as the inflammation began to slowly go away she was struck by a severe toothache. In mid-September 1776 Doctors' Henkel, Sirus and Mutzelius after examining Amalie's eye made it known that they wished to operate; she consented to and supported their diagnosis with the greatest resolve. Dr Mutzelius assured her there was no longer any fear of cancer. Though the procedure used was extremely dangerous, as she had always shown in times of danger, Amalie showed great courage.

In September 1777 Amalie's senior stewardess Frau Maupertuis, though she herself expressed considerable doubt, reported to King Frederick that her mistress has no more doubts about recovering the use of her arms, and that she hopes to have the pleasure of playing the flute with His Majesty next summer.<sup>68</sup> Thiébault wrote what seems to be a dubious account of how Amalie lost her eyesight. After her eyes became inflamed Dr Meckel told her to hold them over the steam of a certain liquid, but warned her that if the liquid touched her eyes she could be blinded. Contrary to the doctors orders she rubbed her eyes furiously with the liquid and almost lost her sight. As a result her previously strikingly beautiful eyes took on a hideous appearance and bulged out of their sockets.<sup>38</sup>

In October 1776 Frederick wrote to the Countess of Hessen: 'My sister Amélie has really alarmed us, she had thought she would collapse; that was the beginning of a stroke, but fortunately the medicine has saved her.'<sup>751</sup> The next year, still ten years before her own death, Wraxall wrote of Amalie: 'Her endowments of mind are said to be extraordinary; but her health and constitution are altogether broken by disease, though she is scarcely fifty-four years of age. She has entirely lost an eye, and the use of one arm' and as a consequence 'is seldom seen in public.'<sup>37</sup>

Around this time John Moore was in Potsdam when the Princess of Hesse and the Duchess of Wurtemberg made an official visit. King Frederick and all his guests stayed in

the New Palace. Superb entertainment by the celebrated Le Kain, a French comedy group and an Italian opera company kept everyone amused.<sup>53</sup> Because the King was estranged from his wife Elisabeth Christine, and had been so since the early 1740s, Moore says Princess Amalie ‘used to do the honours of the King’s household at Potsdam whenever he had any stranger guests.’ As the King arrived ‘Princess Amalie who is Mistress of Ceremonies was there to receive him.’ Every second or third day around 6pm a theatrical performance begins. After the invited guests are seated ‘the Royal Family arrive. The Princess Amalie is led in by Prince Frederick of Brunswick, and the Princess of Hesse by the King.’ The other members of the Royal Family then follow. After the performance ends around 9pm ‘those whom the Princess Amalie orders to be invited stay to supper.’

In the last years of her life Amalie became seriously infirmed. Her head shook and she could no longer hold it upright. Worse still her legs were no longer able to support her emaciated frame, and her speech had all but failed her. And yet her spirit was not broken, for her mind retained its sharp edge and dynamism till the end of her life.

The older Amalie grew the more intolerant she became of her younger music contemporaries who rejected her beloved counterpoint composition techniques. In March 1783 she wrote: ‘We live in a bad and sad time, a time of decline of all beautiful art; for us it is all the sadder because our old age will not permit us’ to reinvigorate her. ‘However, nothing is new in the world while everything in it is transitory; the great origin of the decline of beautiful art rises merely from the deterioration of the morals,’ as was the case with the Greeks and the Romans.<sup>8</sup>

J.A.P. Schulz, a student of Kirnberger’s strict counterpoint school, outraged both his teacher and Amalie by developing a liking for modern French composers and even daring to compose in their style. In 1780 he became the head of Prince Henry’s orchestra at Rheinsburg, a post which he held for seven years. In his younger years Schulz had been generously treated by Amalie. With this in mind he wrote to her, requesting he be able to dedicate his ‘work to so an exalted authority.’ Amalie did not waver. Till her last breath she vigorously defended her beloved teacher Kirnberger and the counterpoint technique of composing music. Her rebuff was direct and to the point: ‘I imagine Herr Schulz! that instead of sending your work to me you have provided the scribbled notes of your child while I did not notice the smallest academic skill therein.’ There are ‘general faults from the beginning to the end, as well as in the expression, inclination and reason of the language... no canonical emulation, not the slightest counterpoint, all fifth’s and octaves, and that shall be called music... Amélie’<sup>29</sup>

Amalie wrote her letter to Schulz in January 1785 barely two years before her death. Though her body had been devastated by illness for near on twenty years and constantly threatened to completely collapse, somehow, quite remarkably, she retained her mental faculties to the end. Arnheim wrote: ‘And really one can still today not ward off a feeling of admiration when one sees the amazing intellectual alertness the badly afflicted Princess retained in her last years.’<sup>54</sup>

However, Amalie was not always severe and sarcastic as her critics so often suggest.

She simply spoke and wrote ‘from the heart.’ If she disliked something she said so. She was not a two-faced hypocrite. And when she liked something, she praised it: ‘What he sent me I have read with great pleasure. It is clear, plain and complete as it must be, nothing left out, in a word nothing too much, nothing too little. The basis of the music places it in such a light that nobody has dared to do. I ask him to continue without rushing, then it will be a complete work and the best of all. Amélie.’<sup>8</sup>

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Princess Louisa, the daughter of Amalie’s younger brother Ferdinand, recalled a few instances from the last two years of Amalie’s life.<sup>55</sup> On one occasion in the presence of the Court preacher Herr Conrad Amalie quizzed her about her religious training and found out it had been extremely superficial. Louisa says her aunt only scolded her so as to embarrass the negligent preacher, and from that time onwards had never treated her unkindly. Louisa says her highly educated aunt Amalie had devoted herself to serious study ever since her health had banished her from society. She adored Louisa’s brother Ludwig\* and Princess Friederika. Amalie gave Ludwig valuable books and handsome presents and spoiled him with endless praise and caresses. She even let him call her by the nickname of the ‘old witch.’

While Amalie was especially devoted to German literature, like her siblings she only spoke the local German dialect of the people using the most trivial expressions. Amalie also cared for a number of little boys who she removed from the streets to ensure they received a Christian up bringing. She looked after them, had them educated at the *Joachimsthal Gymnasium* and always saw them twice a week. Louisa says her aunt spoiled them too much in allowing them to assume a tone of familiarity with her.

Evidence suggests that both Amalie and her brother King Frederick believed in psychic phenomena, such as card and psychic readings. I have also read that Frederick believed in astrology. But why should this shock people? Many great minds throughout history have believed in such things. The great German astronomer Johannes Kepler was an astrologer. Thiébault says Frau von Troussel told him that both she and Amalie were very interested in fortune-telling and they had discussed the subject over a long period of time. Indeed she had sent many fortune-tellers to Amalie. And during the Seven Years’ War Amalie spent whole days having cards drawn on the King’s behalf. Though his name was never mentioned, he received the predictions.<sup>9</sup> Frederick never arrived in Berlin without immediately sending a page to enquire into Amalie’s health. He always made a point of visiting her first and often she was the only one he visited. Frederick always ensured she received fruit from his amazing year-round garden.

In March, 1785 Frau Maupertuis wrote to King Frederick that Amalie was able to walk

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\* The famous Prince Ludwig Ferdinand died an heroic, probably suicidal, death in October 1806 at Saalfeld fighting against Napoleon.

in her room without any support.<sup>68</sup> On 21 May the eight-year-old Frederick von der Marwitz saw an amazing scene: King Frederick, dusty from a day reviewing his troops, ‘came riding on a great white horse, no doubt the old Condé’ followed by ‘a mass of generals, the adjutants and horse attendants. The whole Rondell and Wilhelmstrasse were crammed full of people, all windows full, all heads bare, overall the deepest silence and on all faces an expression of deep respect and trust.’ The King rode out in front and constantly took off his hat to the crowd. ‘Through this respectful silence resounded only the horses hoof-beats and the shouts of the Berlin street urchins who cheered and danced around before him.’ At the Princess’ palace the crowd was even thicker. ‘He rode into the Court, the double doors opened and the old lame Princess Amalie supported by two ladies, the senior Court stewardess behind her, tottered down the shallow flight of stairs towards him.’ The seventy-three-year-old Frederick sprang quickly from his horse and ‘embraced her, offered her his arm and led her up the steps again. The double doors closed; all had vanished. Yet the crowd still stood, bare-headed, silent, all eyes directed on the spot where he had disappeared and it took a while until a person collected himself and went on his way.’<sup>56</sup>

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### ***A Hohenzollern Legend, The White Woman***

Norbert wrote the background story to a famous Hohenzollern family legend, the ‘white woman.’ The husband of the beautiful Anna Sydow from Cölln on the Spree was the most skillful cannon-forging in the whole Brandenburg electorate. One day as the Elector Joachim visited his workshop he met Anna and became bewitched by her beautiful eyes. Some time later, after tiring of her husband’s jealous outbursts towards the Elector, Anna poisoned her husband and soon after became the Elector’s mistress. Using her considerable feminine charms Anna soon plunged her lover into immense debt. When the Elector died his son John George confiscated all the treasure his father had given Anna. He then threw her into a dungeon and had it bricked up while she still lived. Since that time Anna Sydow’s ghost has appeared in the Berlin Palace as the ‘white woman’ in the days just before the sovereign’s death.<sup>31</sup>

One evening at tea time in June 1786 Princess Louisa says Queen Elisabeth Christine while sitting in a closet in her apartment looked out of a window and thought she saw a face bending forward and looking out from a turret. Her immediate response was to summon the ladies and gentlemen of her household to witness the event. They saw it too! Princess Friederika and her governess also declared they too saw the ‘white woman.’<sup>55</sup> Two months later, on 17 August, the mighty King Frederick the Great died. And so the Hohenzollern legend was given a new lease of life. A short while after Frederick’s death, as Amalie awaited a sign of her own impending demise, Countess Schwerin wrote: ‘To the various oddities of Princess Amalie belonged the point that in spite of Voltaire’s explanation she strongly believed in ghosts and that they had intelligence. Her ardent wish was to meet the ‘white woman,’ who she quite surely accepted had had intimate dealings with Queen Elisabeth

Christine. And when her young lady-in-waiting came to tea in the evening she often found the Princess still without light, in full darkness in the great hall, who then quietly whispered to her: “Little Schwerin, I wait for the white woman!”<sup>31</sup>

When Amalie’s brother Frederick died he left her a yearly income of 10 000 talers, a valuable box, twenty barrels of Hungarian wine and a silver table service.<sup>6</sup>

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### ***A Massive Court***

In 1787 some fifty-six people served in Amalie’s Court. Apart from their salaries each Court member was also allowed certain ‘freebies’ to supplement their incomes. That year the ‘free firewood’ list included: Frau von Maupertuis; Fräulein von Zerbst; Fräulein Countess von Dönhoff; major-domo von Derenthal; chamberlain von Kettelhodt; chief page Elsner and three other pages; financial counsellor Braun; Quedlinburg diocese secretary Wilberg; chambermaids: Hartmann, Graun and Grothen; castellan Kirchner; valet Biegner; hairdresser Sager; personal tailor Hoffmann; eight lackeys; two messengers; two female lackeys; a Quedlinburg diocese lackey; five stall attendants; steward Livius; Quedlinburg diocese messenger Jost; wardrobe girl Krumbecic; washherwoman Meyern; chef Müller; kitchen clerk Henning; two cooks; kitchen servant Tornow; cleaning woman Giesen; silver servant Weber; silver cleaner Hahnin; the page’s servant Hoer; two house servants Jost and Schanzer; gardener Puzky; two wood carriers Matheus and Schwizke; two kitchen women Tuchen und Damissen.<sup>63</sup>

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### ***Peace At Last, Death***

Amalie died quite unexpectedly in her beloved Wilhelmstrasse palace at 3pm on 30 March 1787 from what was considered to be a trifling three day long illness. Princess Louisa says that morning Amalie had asked her chambermaid what day it was, and after finding out it was Friday she became convinced of her speedy end.<sup>55</sup> Upon her death Anna Amalia (her official name) had many titles. She was the Royal Princess in Prussia; the Margravine to Brandenburg; the Duchess to Silesia; the Princess from Orange and Nalengen (Vallengin?),\* in Geldern, and to Magdeburg, Cleves, Jülich, Burge, Stettin and Pomerania... to Mecklinburg...; Castle Countess to Nürnberg; Ruling Princess to Halberstadt, Minden, Eamin, Wenden, Schwerin, Ratzeburg, East Fresia and Moeurs; the Abbess of Quedlinburg; the Countess to Oschatz,\* Hohenzollern, Ruppín, the Mark, Ravensberg, Hohenstein, Ecklenburg, Schwerin... the Lady to Ravenstein, the Rostock lands, Stargadt...<sup>75</sup> Following Amalie’s death all public music and plays were forbidden by the police, and for fourteen days between noon and 1pm church bells rang out throughout the monarchy.

An honour guard of an officer and thirty men stood guard over Amalie’s corpse which

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\* Difficult to read the old Gothic script.



lay in the simple, black painted wooden coffin with leather handles, just as she had pre-arranged. Around 9pm on 06 April the mourners, led by Amalie's senior Court stewardess Frau von Maupertuis and her two ladies-in-waiting, Fräulein von Zerbst and Countess von Dönhoff, assembled for the funeral. At 10pm the procession set off from the palace along Wilhelmstrasse and Lindenstrasse to the cathedral (the current site of the Berlin Cathedral). Two majors, Herr von Walther and Herr von Irving, led the procession of coaches. Thereafter followed: the King's representatives; diocese secretary Wilberg and financial counsellor Braun; Amalie's palace and livery servants; two noble Marshals; the major-domo Baron von Derenthal and Royal chamberlain Baron von Ketelhodt; the Royal hearse drawn by six horses, which alongside, on both sides walked princely lackeys carrying torches and eight non commissioned officers; and finally Amalie's Court ladies.<sup>42</sup>

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### *A Magnificent, Generous Legacy*<sup>64-66</sup>

As we shall see, though Amalie was dead the generous legacy which she left behind significantly affected the lives of many people through every rank of Berlin life for decades to come. She left the massive sum of 41 000 talers for the education of youngsters she had supported and for the poor. In no way could Amalie's will be interpreted as anything short of exceedingly magnanimous to those who had faithfully served her. Though her health for more than the last decade of her life left her teetering on the edge between life and death, in no way was her will that of an embittered, twisted soul, as some people saw her. Amalie's will, and its two subsequent codicils, was meticulously drawn up. She forgot nothing and no one, and even left the modest sum of 300 talers to cover her own funeral expenses. In a great show of kindness she forbade her Court members from wearing black mourning dress—often worn for six months after a Royal death—and so saved them much money and inconvenience.

In her first will, dated 03 July 1782, Amalie had made her brother King Frederick the sole heir of her whole estate, which in effect meant her two magnificent palaces. She also left him six diamond rings. In return Amalie entrusted to his mercy and protection all the members of her Royal Household including the most humble of her servants. She asked that their devotion and loyalty, and their untiring and loving service performed over many years be rewarded by granting to them their usual salary and provisions—such as firewood and free food—for the rest of their lives. Amalie's genuine and heartfelt wish was simple. She did not want them to be disadvantaged in any way because of her death.

Amalie's youngest brother Prince Ferdinand became the executor of her estate, as Frederick had died in August of the previous year. Ferdinand was left five diamond rings together with all Amalie's carriages, apart from the ladies carriage which went to Frau Maupertuis, and all her horse harness. Charlotte received either four or five diamond rings, while Henry got five diamond rings and all her chandeliers and marble tables. Princess Louisa complained that Amalie gave no preference to her father Prince Ferdinand over her

other brother Prince Henry, though she always appeared to adore one and detest the other.<sup>55</sup>

Though her debts amounted to 38 000 talers, Amalie also had huge cash reserves of 118 000 talers, of which over eighty per cent was held in gold! Found among her possessions were three essential parts of being a Princess in eighteenth century Europe—two Royal seals and an everyday seal used to seal up and authenticate her letters. Amalie bequeathed her Unter den Linden palace and all its priceless furniture, its coats of arms, the English and French copperplate etchings in the blue folder together with the now-famous portrait of her siblings Frederick and Wilhelmine as children, to Crown Prince Frederick William, by that time King Frederick William II. Her Unter den Linden Palace must have been one impressive building, because both he and his son Frederick William III also lived there. In the 1800s the building became the Russian Embassy, and till this day the embassy is still on that site. Amalie left her Wilhelmstrasse palace and virtually all its furniture to Prince Frederick Ludwig Carl of Prussia.

Senior Court stewardess Frau von Maupertuis headed Amalie's Court for more than three decades. What Amalie left to her loyal friend was nothing short of staggering. The bequest included 20 000 talers in gold, a set of girandole type diamond drop earrings, a case with two diamond earrings, a diamond ring, all of Amalie's small silver and gold nick-nacks, dozens of other valuable nick-nacks, and a gold and green box encrusted with diamonds worth some 4000 talers. (And possibly a gold and blue box encrusted with diamonds, worth 7500 talers.) And that was not all! She also got all of Amalie's French tobacco and wine stocks, her kitchen utensils and tableware, her taffeta and damask (silk) material, her many porcelain and gold snuff boxes with or without jewels, and finally her small marble boxes.

The next in rank in Amalie's Court, her ladies-in-waiting, Fräulein von Zerbst and Countess von Dönhoff (nee Countess Schwerin), received 5000 and 8000 talers respectively and a diamond ring each. In order of rank, her chambermaids Hartmann, Graun and Liebrecht, got 2500, 1500 and 1000 talers respectively, and shared all the clothing and body linen. Major-domo von Meden and chamberlain Baron von Doer(en)berg received 3000 talers each, while the diocese financial counsel Braun got 3500. Though Amalie had a chief page named Elsner, together with three other pages, von Borck, von Osten and von Blanckenberg under him, it appears only two of them, presumably Elsner and the longest serving of the other three, received 500 talers each.

Amalie left 8000 talers, together with the proceeds of the money received from the sale of her horses, to be apportioned out between her lowest ranked servants. The Court preacher Herr Sack received 2000 talers, while 25 000 talers was left to the poor and to support the reformed Calvinist schools throughout the monarchy. The Oranienburg orphanage got 5000 talers. A further 4000 talers was left for children of the reformed parish which Amalie had been providing for and educating. Amalie's legacy to the *Joachimsthal Gymnasium* school in Berlin—its professors had taught her when she was young—was exceedingly generous. The bequest included: around 2900 books printed in English (which numbered over 100, including Shakespeare's complete works in six volumes) Italian, French and German; 600

rare, irreplaceable bands of mostly original music scores; a masterly copperplate etching collection; and two portraits of Kirnberger and P. E. Bach. Amalie also donated 7000 talers for the children she had been supporting at the school so they could complete their education as far as they wanted to go, even through university.

Other beneficiaries included Countess von Fontana, née Countess von Redern, and the wife of State Minister von Dörnberg who were both left a diamond ring each. It appears as though they either obtained the rings before the executor took over or somehow the stones designated to them went ‘missing.’ After all the major aforementioned beneficiaries of Amalie’s will, together with her burial expenses and debts had been paid, Prince Ferdinand as executor presented the following details of ‘free food’ and other privileges members of Amalie’s Court had received over the years. The two ladies-in-waiting, Fräulein von Zerbst and Countess von Dönhoff, reported that each Christmas they had both received 100 talers in cash via Amalie from the King’s pension fund, although the gifts were never recorded on paper, together with ‘free food.’ Major-domo von Derenthal had received free food and free fodder for three horses and three ordinary liveries for two lackeys and a coachman, while chamberlain von Kettelhodt had been given free food.

Major-domo von Derenthal interceded on behalf of some of Amalie’s servants. In his opinion, apart from their already granted pensions, they should also be given a sum to cover their food and lodgings. Firstly, the first valet Biegener and castellan Kirchner because they had served Amalie for twenty to thirty years, and Royal household secretary Wilberg, who had only ever received a salary of 220 talers. Secondly, chef Müller, kitchen clerk Henning, silver servant Weber, first food server (or cook) Beyse, second food server Hartmann and lackey Leichert, who all had been given free food, should each get an extra monthly payment of eight talers eight groschen. Similarly, chief page Elsner should also be compensated. He would be unable to manage on his fixed salary of 120 talers, and had also got free food. Thirdly, personal surgeon Zeibich, who had held his appointment for some fourteen years without a salary, though at times he had been given a little money, should receive a small yearly pension of 100 talers.

Whether the above-mentioned recommendations for continuing provision of such things as ‘free food’ were acted upon depended on the generosity of the new King Frederick William II. What makes striking reading in the executor’s report is the great compassion Prince Ferdinand showed towards Amalie’s loyal servants. Someone’s death always attracts a flurry of greedy persons each seeking to get what he can. The 1786 codicil to the Amalie’s will had left her two cavaliers ‘a box encrusted with diamonds.’ Soon a legal battle broke out between her former cavaliers, von Medem and von Doernberg, and the two men who held those positions at her death, von Derenthal and von Kettelhodt. At the end of the day the latter two received the expensive gifts, worth 3500 and 2000 talers respectively.

Clear evidence exists that at least Amalie’s senior Court officials received pensions for decades after her death. In 1811 her former major-domo von Derenthal petitioned King Frederick William III<sup>64</sup> and reminded him that though Amalie’s last codicil to her will had

made the King her ‘universal heir,’ it had also asserted as paramount that all her surviving Royal Household should continue to get all the extra benefits such as ‘free food’ that they had received while in her service. From Amalie’s death in March 1787 until late September 1806 von Derenthal received his yearly salary of 1000 talers, firewood valued at 90 talers and his other extra benefits. Then it all stopped. He pleaded with the King to be paid some 4097 talers—the amount owing on his unpaid salary and extras package. Though he was looking after two estates, he explained his critical financial plight was the result of poor farm produce prices and the war with France. He found himself overwhelmed by the burden of educating his large family and a large unpaid tax bill.

In mid-1792 Countess Emilie Alexandrine von Kayserling, née Countess von Dönhoff,<sup>61</sup> the wife of chamberlain Count Otto von Kayserling from Leisteran in Königsberg, petitioned King Frederick William II. The Countess, one of Amalie’s former ladies-in-waiting, complained that in September of the previous year her yearly pension of 550 talers had been stopped. The reason given by the authorities was her recent marriage. However she insisted her pension was for life, irrespective of her marital status. The Justice Minister Uhden argued that Amalie’s will supported the Countess’ case, but the King had to decide whether she would once again receive her pension.

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Please do not confuse Amalie with another aristocratic German composer, Anna Amalie, the Duchess of Saxe-Weimar (1739-1807), the daughter of Amalie’s sister Charlotte, who befriended Goethe and set many of his works to music.

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## PRINCESS AMALIE OF PRUSSIA

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3. Voss, *Neunundsechsig Jahre*. p11, p52-53, p80, p86.
4. Büsching, *Character Friedrich*. p171.
5. Wright, *A Royal Affinity*. p38, p122.
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25. Volz, *Friedrich der Große*. Vol. I: p265.
26. Kirchner, *Die Churfürstinnen*. p167-86.
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28. Rohdich, *Friedrich Faszination*. p64.
29. Sachs, *Hohenzollern Jahrbuch*.
30. Bauer, *Berlin Illustrierte*. p178-80.
31. Gervais, *Die Frauen*. p113-17.
32. Lehdorff, *Aus dem Tagebüchern*. p130-31, p139-41, p178.
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35. Voss, *69 Years*. p85, p106, p115.
36. Werther, *Das Eherne Herz*. p118.
37. Wraxall, *Memoirs*. p49, p59, p131.
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42. Schneider, *Das Palais*. p20-44.
43. Rürup, *Topographie*.
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54. Arnheim, *Der Hof Friedrich*. p18-20.
55. Radziwill, *45 Years*. p48-69.
56. Marwitz, *Aus dem Nachlaße*. p18-19.
- 57-67: Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Dahlem, Berlin: 'Prinzeßin Anna Amalia von Preußen,'  
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63 = W128; 64 = W102; 65 = W129; 66 = W130 and W133 (Amalie's will dated 03 July 1782, and two codicilles  
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## II

# BARON FREDERICK von der TRENCK

### *Introduction*

Max Wild quite rightly asserts that King Frederick II of Prussia, known as the Great, would not have wasted as much time as he did on a simple aristocrat like Trenck without a very good reason for doing so. An unimportant cornet\*—as Trenck at first may appear to be—would have been simply locked up, cashiered and sent packing. But the King's lasting rage towards him, together with his constant personal involvement in his case shows the cornet was openly no 'small fish.' Wild's assertions are supported by the many precise penal instructions which the King sent to the governors of Magdeburg, and by their many immediate reports on prisoner Trenck—as he rotted in the King's gaols for more than a decade, chained up like a wild animal.

The autobiography of Frederick William von der Trenck (1727-1794), first released in several volumes between 1786 and 1792, has throughout the last two hundred years been published many times, in many languages. English translations appeared in 1788 (Holcroft), 1820 (Johnston) and in 1927 (Murray). Even as recently as the late 1980s it was re-released yet again in German. When the story of Casanova's love adventures and escapades were first heard in Germany, he was called a 'Trenck,' just like we now call a seducer of women a 'Casanova.'

Otto von Bismarck, the founder of the German Empire, in his *Gedanken und Erinnerungen* (memoirs) spoke of the 'mishandling of Trenck.' In stark contrast, Prussian historians such as Koser, Droysen, Volz, and Schuster have attacked Trenck's credibility over the past century or so. What they all did was to tear holes in his autobiography—which is VERY easy to do because it is full of many glaring inaccuracies, and so in the process discredit him. On the other side of the ledger, few people apart from Max Wild have really looked behind the 'smoke screen' that covers up the facts. For the truth is there for all those who wish to see it.

Even Trenck admitted the mistakes in his book were highly regrettable. And how did they come about? Firstly, he obviously did not check the dates of his recollections. Secondly, he wrote it some forty years after the important events had occurred. And no doubt being chained up alone in a dark, wet cell for around a decade of his life did not help his memory! If he were a liar he would have checked the verifiable dates—he was certainly educated enough to easily do so. Liars invariably get their 'facts' right in order to back up their claims.

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\* The lowest ranking officer in a troop of cavalry who carried the colours.



Indeed, I see the silly errors in his work as strong evidence to support my claim that he did not make up his story.

In my view there are several primary reasons why the old Prussian historians worked so hard to discredit Trenck: to justify the brutal treatment he suffered at the hands of their hero King Frederick the Great; to discredit his claim he was the lover of their hero King's youngest sister, Princess Amalie of Prussia; to keep their jobs, as most of them were paid by the Government. An unfavourable verdict against the great King could have lost them their jobs.

Unquestionably Trenck was incredibly naive and had no idea about cause and effect—like if you have an affair with a Princess, and even worse get her pregnant (as I emphatically believe he did)—you will surely end up in deep trouble, and in gaol! Yet to a man, even his greatest detractors spoke of his indestructible will, a quality which every reader of this chapter must come to appreciate. Unquestionably Trenck 'stretched the truth' to the breaking point in his autobiography, but he had to make his life sound exciting in order to sell his story, as at that time in his life he was virtually insolvent.

This chapter combines together the relevant parts of Trenck's autobiography<sup>1</sup> with historically verifiable facts, such as official Government documents. My aim is simple—to uncover the true story behind the legend surrounding a famous Brandenburg-Prussian love affair. That Trenck and Princess Amalie were lovers I have NO doubt, but the reader himself must make his own mind up based on the evidence presented.

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### ***A Proud Family History***

The Trenck family, which originally came from Franconia, a German duchy bordering the River Main somewhere near Frankfurt, migrated in the thirteenth century to Prussia with the German Order of Knights. In October 1533 the Grand Master of the Order, Duke Albrecht of Prussia, gave the family the Scharlacker estates in the Labiau district, some forty kilometres north-east of Königsberg. Through both marriage and purchase the Trenck family estates grew to include: Scharlack, Schakaulack (612 ha.), Christroplack, Rodwienen, Poparten, Kodern, Taktau, Kapstücken, Perkuiken, Sokallen, Meiken, Köthen, Meerlauken and Perkeisten.<sup>2</sup> More than a century later Achatius von der Trenck gave the Great Elector, Frederick William I of Brandenburg, the massive sum of 16 500 Marks to help him conclude the Lübeck Peace Treaty. In return for the favour given the Elector recognized Achatius' generosity by giving him the Goldbach estate near Wehlau in April 1652.<sup>3</sup>

For hundreds of years the Trencks served the rulers of Brandenburg-Prussia. One Trenck family line can be traced back through Sebastian who died in 1688. He was the master of Schakaulack and a captain-lieutenant in the Brandenburg army. His grandson Ludwig (born 1699) became a captain, while Ludwig's son Frederick Ludwig (born 1731) became a hussar major-general. Ludwig's grandson William (born 1788) became a captain in the Russian army. Another of Sebastian's grandson's Wolff Frederick (born 1700) was a colonel, while

Wolff's grandson Frederick Ernest (born 1741) was a major. Sebastian's Trenck's brother Hans Dietrich (died 1673) was a cavalry captain.

Hans von der Trenck's son Christopher Albrecht (died 1707), who also became a cavalry captain, had two sons: John Henry who was born in 1664 (died 11 February 1743); and Christopher Ehrenreich who was born in 1677. Remarkably these two had sons—called Franz and Frederick respectively—who both became (in)famous. Two chapters in this book are devoted to these two tearaways.

Other warriors of note were also born to Trenck daughters. Sebastian Ernest von Manstein (died 1747), the grandson of Anna von der Trenck and George von Partein, rose to become a Russian major-general. In 1714 George Frederick von Manstein, the son of Anna Louisa von der Trenck and George William von Manstein, gained a most esteemed position as a page to Queen Sophie Dorothea. Many years later during the Second Silesian War he was promoted for heroism while under fire. Sadly his life was cut short when he fell in the battle for Prague in May 1757 with the rank of a colonel.<sup>4</sup> John von Lehwald (born 24 June 1685) was the son of Marie Esther von der Trenck. As was the custom, his army career progressed slowly. But while it took him five years to become a standard-bearer, others sometimes took seven years. After some forty-five years of service he was promoted to major-general. In 1751 he was made a Field Marshal, of which there were only two or three in the whole Brandenburg-Prussian army. John fought in the two Silesian Wars and for the first eighteen months of the Seven Years' War. Then in early 1758, when seventy-two years old, he was made the interim Governor of Berlin over Lieutenant General von Rochow. In October 1760 he was forced to withdraw his force to Spandau when the enemy attacked Berlin. John remained in his last post until 1763.<sup>5A</sup>

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### ***Trenck's Parents And Siblings***

In February 1724 forty-seven-year-old Christopher Ehrenreich von der Trenck married sixteen-year-old Marie Charlotte von Derschau. His young bride came from an extremely distinguished family—her father Albrecht Frederick von Derschau was the President of the Royal Law Court in Königsberg. Yet another Derschau was a Government Finance Minister and Postmaster General of the Royal Domains in Berlin, while two others were infantry generals. The Trenck's named their first born child Dorothea Charlotte. Their next child, Henriette Albertine, was born in Wolmirstedt on 19 January 1726. Nine months later Christopher Ehrenreich von der Trenck was transferred to the small garrison town of Haldensleben, near Magdeburg, as the commanding officer and lieutenant colonel of Margrave Albrecht's regiment. Soon after he moved his family into the brewery house, which now bears the name of the *Goldene Stern* (Golden Star) hotel, where the new regiment chief had extensive, indeed expensive, renovations done.<sup>32</sup>

Frederick William von der Trenck—who was to become arguably one of the most defamed and (in)famous Brandenburg-Prussians of the eighteenth century—was born in

Haldensleben on 16 February 1727\* and christened four days later. His sister Henriette Albertine, born 20 February 1728, and brother Ludwig Ehrenreich, born 14 August 1729, were also born there. A month or so after Ludwig's birth his battle-scarred father, by now a cuirassier regiment veteran, was transferred to Königsberg in Prussia.<sup>32, 33</sup> The last born child, born in 1730, was christened Ludwig Ehrenreich.

Dorothea Charlotte married Herrn von Meyerentz from Heinrichshofen, while Henriette Albertine married Lieutenant Karl Ludwig von Waldow, the only son of the famous Lieutenant General Arnold Christopher von Waldow from Hammer, near Landsberg. Ludwig Ehrenreich served in the cuirassier regiment von Kyau. He lived on his Meyicken estate and owned Legitten and Wisritten. Carl Albrecht inherited the family estates of Schakaulack and Gross Scharlach. In June 1798 Frederick William III made him the first Count von der Trenck.

In the spring of 1735 Baron Christopher Ehrenreich von der Trenck, the commanding colonel of cuirassier regiment Nr. 12 von Waldow, let disturbing cases of insubordination among his officers go by without punishment. As the affair became known King Frederick William I stepped in and ordered that the officers be court-martialed. In February 1737 the sentences were handed out. Colonel von der Trenck got eighteen months. Major von Wedel and six cavalry captains, three of whom were also cashiered, including Count von Lostange, got six to twenty-four months fortress arrest in Pillau. Twenty-two other officers got two to six months barracks arrest, but still had to perform their duties.<sup>6A</sup> Though the King upheld the judgement, he did not hold it against Colonel von der Trenck.

Major-general Christopher Ehrenreich von der Trenck left the army in August 1739. And you may say so what, just a major-general. But there is much more to tell. Between 1713 and 1740 no more than ninety men in the entire Brandenburg-Prussian army of King Frederick William I were promoted to the rank of major-general or higher! In 1740 the army was 83 000 men strong. During the preceding three decades old age and illness so reduced the number of generals that Trenck's promotion to major-general placed him in the top twenty-five ranking officers in the monarchy's army! And that in a country renowned as a military State—with the best soldiers in the whole of Europe—made him a man of considerable importance.<sup>7</sup> King Frederick William I wrote to his retiring, esteemed major-general: 'I reply to your letter that your release from my military service has not happened out of disfavour, but because your age and weakness no longer leaves you in a condition to serve. However I assure you you shall have the first Government leadership post that falls vacant.'<sup>5B</sup>

Major-general Christopher Ehrenreich von der Trenck died within nine months of his retirement, in May 1740. The next year his widow Marie Charlotte married the aforementioned, the cashiered Count Karl von Lostange, who in the meantime had joined the Austrian army. She went to live with her new husband in Breslau, leaving her fourteen-

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\* Called NeuHaldensleben between 1807 and 1938. Trenck wrote he was born in Königsburg in 1726.

year-old and eldest son Frederick William in his grandfather's care. The youngster later wrote his childhood had been stolen from him by incessant, forced learning—up to twelve hours a day! He soon noticed he had a decided intellectual and physical superiority over his peers, which led to him becoming arrogant. Fiery. Impatient. Violent. Too easily and too often getting into duels is how Trenck saw himself. An official document shows he began studying law at Königsberg University in June 1741.<sup>8C</sup>

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### ***Entering The Garde-Du-Corps***

In November 1742 Trenck says\* he travelled to Potsdam with Adjutant-general Baron Lottum, a relative of his mother. Soon after being presented to King Frederick he became a cadet in the King's *garde-du-corps* (bodyguard) Quite remarkably just six weeks later, after being examined by the King, he was given a cornet's commission. In August 1743 he claims he was sent to Silesia to instruct the cavalry in new manoeuvres. (A cornet instructing manoeuvres? Impossible!) An officers' departure list shows Trenck actually joined the *garde-du-corps* on 01 July 1744 and was promoted to a cornet on 02 August.<sup>8A</sup> Family tradition has it that he actually took part in celebrations at the Berlin Palace in January 1744.<sup>6D</sup> This seems not beyond the realms of possibility, as his rich, esteemed, aristocratic family would have been able to arrange such an introduction to society. On 07 May 1744 King Frederick II wrote to Trenck's mother: 'I gather from your letter you wish your eldest son from your first marriage to be placed in my army. That I will be pleased to do, so could you send him care of Colonel von Borck, the sooner the better. When he performs well and applies himself I shall care for him.'<sup>5B</sup>

The young, strapping Trenck was just under 1.8 metres tall and quite handsome. He says the *garde-du-corps* was recognized as the elite squadron in the King's entire 83 000-man army. Its six officers and one hundred and forty-four men wore resplendent uniforms that were without equal in the whole of Europe. It cost 2000 rix-dollars alone just for an officer to equip himself. His silver-plated cuirass—body armour consisting of a breastplate and a backplate—his horse and saddlery alone cost 400 rix-dollars. The corps wintered in Berlin, spent spring in Charlottenburg (now a suburb in the centre of Berlin), and in summer was stationed at Potsdam or wherever the King chose to go. That the King made Trenck an officer within six weeks of joining the corps seems remarkable, and shows he believed the youngster not only had enormous ability but that he had the potential to rise rapidly up through the ranks.

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### ***Falling In Love With Princess Amalie***

When on 17 July 1744 Princess Ulrike married the Swedish Crown Prince Adolph Frederick

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\* In this chapter, except where another source is quoted, all information attributed to Trenck—I usually use 'Trenck says' to identify it—has been extracted from Trenck's autobiography.<sup>1</sup>

by proxy in Berlin,\* the King's elite *garde-du-corps* took part in the festivities which followed. In a crowded banquet hall Trenck says a villain, quite unobserved, stole his watch and cut away a part of the gold fringe from the waistcoat of his uniform. As his colleagues discovered his loss and began to stir him up, a high-born lady consoled him saying that she herself would make good his loss. Her offer was accompanied by a look which he could not misunderstand. However, out of gratitude to his best friend and benefactress (the Princess Amalie) he determined not to reveal her name—it would be a secret he would take with him to the grave!

Trenck says he had the honour as an officer of his corps to escort Princess Ulrike, accompanied by her sister Princess Amalie, to Stettin on the Swedish border. The escort arrived there on 28 July and then returned by the month's end to Berlin. As the love affair blossomed with his high-born girlfriend (Princess Amalie) Trenck said she was 'a lady who I could only view with the deepest respect' and 'it was on both sides, our first love.' His mistress gave him more money than he could spend and soon he was the best equipped officer in the whole corps. Twice he was arrested after sneaking off to see her after his absences from Charlottenburg and Potsdam were discovered.

Naturally the King's *garde-du-corps* was always close by its sovereign. Most certainly the King's sister, Amalie, was also in the vicinity. Love at first sight does happen. And most certainly, an affair between a Princess and an officer in the King's bodyguard cannot be put in the realm of the impossible. Throughout this manuscript are demonstrated the many love affairs of King Frederick and his princely brothers and relatives. Similarly, it is also highly likely the Royal princesses, though they were strictly supervised, also had love affairs. In Book I, the tragic love affair between Sophie Dorothea, the wife of George I of England, and Philip Königsmark is fully explained. In the end, Königsmark was murdered by George's family, while Sophie Dorothea was imprisoned for the last thirty-two years of her life. Sophie Dorothea was Amalie's grandmother. I believe tragedies repeat themselves within families. 'Like father, like son,' could also be written 'like grandmother, like granddaughter.' Simply put, what the Princes did, the Princesses could have also done! I am sure the hearts of eighteenth-century Prussian Princesses were not immune from sexual urges.

It is known King Frederick, his *garde-du-corps*, including Trenck, and the rest of his army set off for Silesia on 15 August to trigger off the Second Silesian War. Simply put, Trenck and Amalie had less than three weeks to get to know each other before his departure. However anyone who has ever fallen in love at first sight will understand that (unlike staid, old, German historians who could not imagine such an event) it only takes but a moment in time. It is certainly not out of the question that Amalie and Trenck wrote love letters to each other until his squadron returned to Berlin with the King on 24 December, or even until he was imprisoned on 28 June 1745.

My research in the Brandenburg-Prussian State Archive in Berlin uncovered information

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\* Trenck says the marriage took place in the winter of 1743.

suggesting that love letters between Amalie and Trenck had indeed existed. In a note, dated 18 December 1930, Dr Karl Walter of 31a Niebuhrstrasse, Charlottenburg-Berlin wrote to Prince August William informing him letters written by Princess Amalie to Baron Frederick von der Trenck were to be found in the archive of Count Gustav von der Trenck in Schakaulack, East Prussia.<sup>10A</sup> Sadly, all my quite extensive investigations to find the letters, or knowledge of them, through Trenck descendants and many archives and libraries have proved fruitless. Gechter also says Frederick Wencker, who published a new edition of Trenck's memoirs in 1921 (*Der Gefangene Frederick des Großen*. Opalbücherei. Dresden, 1921) knew from a private source that Trenck's brother's direct descendant Gustav, the fifth Count von der Trenck, was in possession of the love letters Amalie of Prussia had sent to Trenck. However, out of respect for the Hohenzollern family they would not be published.<sup>11</sup>

Trenck says the Second Silesian War began with a hasty march through Saxony followed by a twelve day siege and subsequent capitulation of Prague in which 18 000 prisoners were taken. However the advancing Austrian army of Prince Charles of Lorraine, the onset of winter and the lack of food then forced them to retreat. Within weeks 30 000 men had deserted.\*

The day before Christmas the King and his *garde-du-corps* returned to Berlin. Trenck says he was 'received with open arms' by his mistress. He had gained his King's confidence, more than 500 ducats in presents and that winter was allowed to attend meetings of the Court literati. All the attention he was receiving soon made many people jealous of him; he admitted his honesty, frankness and openness made him an extremely poor courtier. As his pursuit of his lover became less cautious Trenck says their affair became public knowledge. A smart remark by a Foot Guard's lieutenant led to a duel in which Trenck wounded his mocker. The next Sunday on parade the King addressed him in an angry tone: 'Sir! Storm and thunder shall strike your heart. Beware!' A short time later after being late on parade Trenck says the King had him arrested. Such a misdemeanour usually got the offender no more than six days under arrest. However after being sent to Berlin by General Bourke to deliver some letters, Trenck says he was again arrested upon his return to Potsdam and was not released until early May,\*\* just three days before the army's departure for Silesia.

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By the mid-1740s Trenck's cousin Franz von der Trenck, the much feared Austrian pandour colonel, had developed quite a reputation as a ferocious warrior who not infrequently spread fear and chaos among parts of the Brandenburg-Prussian army. The brutal, terrifying, barely civilized Pandours came from Croatia. Interestingly on 02 October 1744 Franz<sup>5C</sup> captured Budweis and its commandant, von Derschau—who was most likely a relative of his cousin's mother! Franz was well known to the mighty King Frederick, and

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\* The numbers of prisoners and deserters are massively over exaggerated.

\*\* The King and his garde-du-corps, including Trenck , actually left on 15 March.



through the Berlin newspaper reports of his activities he had become quite famous. The last chapter of this Book III chronicles Franz's amazing life.

Trenck says the following incident was the root cause of all his suffering. Apparently Franz wrote to Trenck's mother to inform her he had made her son his universal heir. Then in February 1744 (it had to be between July 1744 when he joined the Corps, and mid-1745 when he was gaoled) Trenck's commanding officer, the Lithuanian born George Christopher von Jaschinsky, in the presence of Lieutenant Studnitz and Cornet Wagnitz, suggested he write to his cousin. He says he handed the unsealed letter to Jaschinsky, who then mailed it. As the 1745 campaign against the Austrians raged Trenck says one of his grooms and two lead horses previously captured by his cousin's pandours were returned to him several days later, accompanied by a letter from his cousin. This unfortunate incident aroused the suspicion of the King.

The battle of Hohenfriedberg on 04 June 1745 fought against a combined Austrian-Saxon army was a bloody encounter. (Trenck gave the battle date as 14 June, and that 18 000 bodies lay on the plain. Both claims are wrong.) Trenck says his squadron, the finest in the world, made three attacks on the cavalry and two on the infantry and took seven standards and five pairs of colours. A great victory was won and all the *garde-du-corps* officers were awarded the Order of Merit (which is true).

After the battle of Soor on 30 September 1745 Trenck says the camp postman brought him a letter from his Austrian cousin, antedated by four months, which ended 'come and join one who will receive you with open arms like his friend and son.' He says he immediately showed the letter to Cornet Wagnitz, Lieutenant Grotthausen and Colonel Jaschinsky. Trenck says Jaschinsky had persuaded him to write to his cousin so he could trap him with a fictitious, incriminating answer. Not only did Jaschinsky owe him 400 ducats but some time beforehand they had almost fought a duel after Jaschinsky had been caught beating one of Trenck's servants. Jaschinsky left the *garde-du-corps* in 1747 to become the colonel and commander of cuirassier regiment Nr. 9, and eventually joined the Polish army in 1750.<sup>12</sup>

A story has been written which says that many decades later Trenck visited Königsberg where the seventy-six-year-old Jaschinsky was then living, and that when he heard of Trenck's arrival he went insane. It is possible the gist of Trenck's story about Jaschinsky and Franz's letter is true. But he did not fight at Soor, as he was gaoled in June. His book was written some forty years after the event, and after ten years chained up in a damp, dark cell. Possibly he mixed up his recollections with what others had told him.

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### ***Gaoled In Glatz***

The day after receiving his cousin's letter Trenck says he was arrested, and under an escort of fifty hussars was taken and gaoled in the Glatz fortress, in southern Silesia. There was no hearing, no trial, just the King's command! And he was never told what crime he had committed. Trenck says he never harboured a thought of betraying his country. Why should

he? At the tender age of eighteen he was a cornet who kept seven horses and four grooms. Not only was he the King's adjutant (actually he was an ordinance officer), but in one year the King had given him presents worth \$1500. Also many of his relations held both civil and military offices. Why should he desert? (Good question!)

G.B. Volz rigorously collected many official documents and letters relating to Trenck's life. But with respect to his arrest he found only one document. From his camp near Divetz King Frederick wrote to Major-general Fouqué, the commander of Glatz, on 28 June 1745. The order was short and to the point: 'You shall accept the fortress-arrest of the herewith sent Cornet von Trenck of the *garde-du-corps*, and place him in the fortress and guard him well so that he can in no way correspond with anyone. Friderich\* p.s. Guard this rogue rigorously; he wanted to be with his Pandour uncle (actually his cousin).'<sup>8C</sup>

It seems abundantly clear Trenck was not court-martialed in 1745. But, the King seems to be insinuating he intended to desert to Brandenburg-Prussia's mortal enemy, Austria. Surely in a time of warfare with the monarchy far from secure an exposed spy within the King's own bodyguard would have been shown no mercy? So the correspondence must have been of a trivial nature as Trenck suggests. Even so the King could have insisted he be executed, as Article 20 of the then Prussian Articles of War demanded: 'No soldier shall correspond with the enemy verbally or in writing... by punishment of death.'<sup>9</sup> More interestingly, was Trenck gaoled to prevent him from further corresponding with King Frederick's sister Princess Amalie? And had Trenck got her pregnant, as I believe, her pregnancy would have been obvious by this time! If he was Amalie's lover King Frederick would not have dared to have sentenced him to death, for that would have embittered Amalie against him forever.

At first life in Glatz was not too unpleasant for Trenck. He says he was able to walk the ramparts and his servants could still wait upon him. His claim of every day keeping table for the poor officers of the garrison seems validated by the fact that receipts were later found which showed one month's food and wine to have cost him the massive sum of 180 talers.\*\* (A soldier earned around forty talers per year.) Yet another bill recorded some forty-seven bottles of wine.<sup>9</sup> Trenck says he bribed an officer to get a letter to his Berlin lover, who in turn sent him 1000 ducats and her support. But after a submissive letter written to the King requesting a court-martial received no answer Trenck fell into a state of despair. Soon after, egged on by the officers of the garrison, he decided to escape. The severity of his imprisonment increased after his first attempt to escape was betrayed by a fellow prisoner.

It was easy for the wealthy Trenck to get the garrison officers on his side. They were violent men, overwhelmed with debt, ready to do desperate things if they believed it to be to their advantage. Yet another escape bid failed when Trenck got hopelessly bogged in the moat and was forced to call the sentry. The Governor Fouqué left him standing in the mud

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\* The King signed his name this way.

\*\* One taler bought around 100 loaves of bread. A wild boar cost four talers, while a whole deer cost three.

until noon, the sport of the soldiers. Trenck says Fouqué was a sworn enemy of his family. Not only had his father wounded him in a duel, but his Austrian cousin Franz had stolen his baggage in 1744 and had still further humiliated him by making a levy on his county of Glatz.

After yet another failed escape bid in which he wounded four guards, and he himself was badly beaten, Trenck says he was told for the first time his sentence had only three weeks to go. It had only been for one year so the King could check out his suspicions of him. Previously he had been told his imprisonment was for life. He later found out his mother had petitioned the King. He answered: 'Your son must remain in prison for a year, as a punishment for his rash correspondence.' (With whom? His cousin or Princess Amalie?) Trenck says Princess Amalie then wrote to him: 'I mourn with you. The evil cannot be remedied. This is my last letter. I dare do no more for you. Escape if you can. I am forever and in all circumstances the old girlfriend, if only it were possible to be helpful to you. Farewell unhappy friend! You deserve a better fate.'<sup>8C</sup>

Two glaring questions remain unanswered. If Trenck did write submissively to the King was his letter ever delivered? Were important letters and information, both to and from Trenck, deliberately withheld from him by Fouqué, the supposed enemy of the Trenck family, in a deliberate attempt to goad the hot-headed prisoner into escaping? I believe it is highly likely! Further, his assertion that he was told his imprisonment was for life must be correct! If he had known he had only twelve months to serve he would not have attempted to escape.

Soon after Trenck says he attempted yet another escape which supposedly involved thirty-two men from the garrison—all desperate, violent, debt-ridden men without honour, most of whom had been sent to Glatz as a punishment. But again his plan was betrayed. Nicolai, the leader of the conspirators, deserted into Bohemia with nineteen others. The official version of this escape attempt reads somewhat differently to Trenck's version. Supposedly Nicolai's wife was to obtain a sleeping draught to knock out the sentries who stood guard in Trenck's room, after which he would escape by removing a stone in the wall. In 1747 a court-martial demoted Nicolai and ordered that over a two day period he 'run the gauntlet'\* twenty-four times. His wife got six months work in a spinning-house (a women's prison).<sup>8C</sup>

Another of Trenck's escape bids is also officially documented. On 20 June 1746 Major von Quadt reported another prisoner, Lieutenant von Gersdorff, had seen Trenck with two pairs of pistols. He had intended to escape with standard bearer Reitz, who had organized the horses. Reitz was cashiered by a court-martial in 1747 and sentenced to three years in gaol. His lover Josepha Zebulowsky got three months working in a spinning-house.<sup>8C</sup> Many years later an amazing statement came to light regarding Trenck's time in Glatz. In July 1754 Abramson, the Austrian Resident in Danzig, wrote he had seen an official Prussian

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\* A severe military punishment where the offender is forced to run between two rows of soldiers as they aggressively strike out with cane sticks or similar.

Government document saying Trenck had ‘endeavoured seven times to escape out of the well guarded Glatz fortress, until he finally succeeded at the eighth attempt.’<sup>8F</sup>

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### ***Escape And Court Martial***

On 26 November 1746 Trenck, accompanied by the officer-on-watch Lieutenant Schell, was finally able to make good his escape from Glatz. Colonel von Knobelsdorff reported Schell had not properly locked the door to Trenck’s room. Around 6pm, as the best non-commissioned officer was sent to lock the Fieldgate, the two deserters jumped down from parapet number ten and took flight. The sentry on parapet number eight observed the escape and soon after the alarm-cannon was fired to alert the surrounding populace.<sup>8D</sup>

After Trenck’s desertion, as it was now, King Frederick worked hard to ensure he got nothing from his fortune. On 08 December he wrote to the Glatz commander Fouqué that both deserters would be ‘hanged in effigy’ and their ‘fortunes in my lands be confiscated.’<sup>8D</sup> The King wrote two further letters to his Government, on 08 December 1746 and on 21 Jan 1747—Trenck must not even get the smallest part of his fortune! On 21 February he wrote to his State Finance Minister von Arnim. The message was clear. As long as Trenck lives his whole fortune will be sequestered and all revenues put into the War Invalid’s Fund and not until after his death will it be distributed to his siblings and their heirs.<sup>13B</sup>

Some nine years after Trenck’s escape from Glatz, in May 1755 to be exact, his siblings made a list of his debts so they could be settled. A small portion of the list shows the money he borrowed around the time he was in Glatz:<sup>13B</sup>

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#### **MONEY BORROWED BY TRENCK FROM HIS SISTERS AND, PROBABLY, A COUSIN.**

<b>From</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Amount (in gulden)</b>
Lt. von Derschau	13 May 1744	100
	06 February 1746	600*
	07 March 1746	330*
	30 May 1746	120*
	08 November 1746	600*
Frau von Meyerenz	02 July 1746	900*
Frau von Waldow	?	170

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What did Trenck do with the massive amount of 2550 gulden in gold coins he obtained in 1746 while in Glatz? Bribe guards and live the good life as rich prisoners did in those days? But what is most fascinating is that just eighteen days before his successful escape he borrowed 600 gulden from Lieutenant von Derschau. Did he use it to bribe his way out of

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\* Money Trenck borrowed in 1746 while in Glatz.

gaol? Perhaps his flight through Poland was not as poverty-stricken and miserable as he paints in his autobiography? In his absence Trenck was court-martialed in April 1747. The report mentioned Trenck's confession of his attempted desertion of 20 June 1746, and how Lieutenant Schell had left behind in the sentry room perjurious plans covered with impertinent expressions. Not surprisingly the court's judgement confirmed the King's thoughts that both deserters had forfeited all honour and dignity, that their fortunes be confiscated and that they be hanged in effigy.<sup>8D</sup>

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As Trenck and Lieutenant Schell jumped down from the Glatz fortress wall towards freedom on that wintry November evening Schell twisted his ankle so badly that Trenck says he was forced to carry him for miles through waist-deep snow. After swimming the freezing Neisse River, they struggled on through the frosty night before finally making it over the border into Bohemia on two horses they 'borrowed.' In the frontier town of Braunau they were helped by a weaver who Trenck had been billeted with during the previous year's campaign. The horses were returned back home. Trenck says he was determined to travel on foot to his mother, obtain money from her and enter the Russian service. On 05 February as he and Schell ate their supper in Czenstochowa a private carriage arrived. Later that evening they fled into the bleak, wintry night after being warned by the innkeeper they were about to be arrested. The next day their pursuers caught up with them. A battle ensued in which Schell was shot in the neck and three of their assailants were killed. Trenck managed to grab a silver watch, a musket and a hat from one of the fallen men before they quickly fled the scene after catching a glimpse of an approaching coach, fearing otherwise capture as highwaymen.

The two deserters sold their possessions along the way to get money to buy food. Though it was still winter their situation became so desperate that hunger forced Trenck to sell his coat; he also shot birds which were eaten raw to ward off starvation. Trenck says on 27 February he knocked on the door of his sister's house in Hammer. Under threat of arrest her husband ordered them to leave. That night, half dead with hunger and fatigue and not daring to enter any public house the two forlorn men dragged their weary bodies through the snow and rain. At Wongrowitz, after forty hours of walking through sleet and snow without food or sleep, a desperate Trenck sold the musket which had provided so many meals. On 10 March in Thorn things looked decidedly grim after a Prussian enlister denounced them as suspicious people. Fortunately their forged Moravian passports and their route diary were enough to prove their 'innocence.' Things took a decided turn for the better in Elbing where Trenck says his former tutor Brodowsky helped him. His mother visited him there, and somehow found a way to get a letter to his Berlin lover (Princess Amalie), who subsequently sent him 400 ducats. His mother also gave him money but insisted—against his better judgement—that he head for Vienna.

Dressed in an officer's uniform, accompanied by Schell and two servants, Trenck says

he reached Vienna in April 1747. There he found his cousin Franz von der Trenck in prison. Franz's father had made his fortune in Austria after arriving there from Prussia in 1683. He had been an army colonel and the Governor of Leitschau and had acquired extensive estates in Slavonia. During his second audience with the Austrian Emperor Trenck says he was told the War Council President was his cousin's declared enemy. Then as Franz's enemies plotted his destruction, Franz himself supposedly exposed Trenck's offer to help him escape, in a vain attempt to prove his own innocence. Franz had a ruthless streak; he would not hesitate to eliminate his best friend if he felt beholden to him, or if he thought he could steal his fortune. Nevertheless, Trenck says he laboured hard in his cousin's defence. One evening as he left the prison after visiting Franz he was followed by two men in grey overcoats. As he turned around a sword penetrated the trial papers concealed under his coat, fortunately only grazing him. As he pursued his assassins the guard came running. It was the word of two men against one and Trenck found himself gaoled for six days. Upon his release his attackers challenged him to a duel. Trenck wounded three of his assassins. One of the men who he mortally wounded later told him Franz had organized the plot to kill him.

On his way to Holland in August 1748 Trenck says he ran into one of his mother's relatives, the Russian General Lieuwen, in Nürnberg. Soon after he joined the general's army as a dragoon company leader. One of Trenck's first assignments was to escort one hundred and forty sick men to Danzig. When he arrived there he was tipped off that a Prussian officer was plotting to capture him. Trenck set up his own trap, captured his Prussian ambushers and then had them whipped in public, in the street. He then travelled to Riga to see his commanding officer, General Lieuwen, who gave him letters of introduction to the Russian Court in Moscow. Through Count Hamilton who he had befriended in Vienna, Trenck says he was introduced to the Austrian envoy, General Bernes, who in turn introduced him to the English envoy, Lord Hyndford. At Court Trenck was introduced as the heir to his family's extensive Hungarian estates.

The tall, handsome Trenck had few problems in attracting female admirers. While in Moscow he says he met and fell in love with a beautiful, seventeen-year-old Russian Princess who had been promised in marriage to an old, sick Government Minister. But before the lovers plan to flee from Russia together could come to fruition the Princess contracted smallpox and died. Once again tragedy had crossed Trenck's path. A short while after Countess Bestuzhev, the wife of the Russian Chancellor, whose spies had told her of Trenck's affair with the Princess, quizzed him. After he emphatically denied the affair had taken place Trenck says the Countess confessed her love for him, but in return she insisted upon discretion, secrecy and fidelity. Fortunately for our hero a clumsy plot contrived by the Prussian envoy Goltz to prove Trenck was betraying the Russians was soon exposed for what it was by Lord Hyndford.

When Franz von der Trenck died in the Spielberg fortress on 04 October 1749 Trenck's future seemed assured. His cousin had named him the heir to his enormous fortune provided that 'my cousin adopts the Catholic faith, makes himself resident in the Austrian lands and



does not take up or remain in the service of a foreign power.’<sup>8D</sup> So in the spring of 1750, accompanied by the boundless encouragement of Count Bernes, the Austrian envoy to Moscow, Trenck made his way to Vienna. On the journey he received letters from the Count assuring him that heaven was to be found in Vienna, that the Empress would support his claims.

When Trenck arrived in Vienna he was arrested, accused of being a money forger. Nine days later after proving his innocence he was released. However, his demand for an open apology by the police in the city newspaper was not forthcoming, so to appease him he was given a cavalry captain’s commission.<sup>14</sup> Trenck says he soon found himself entangled in sixty-three lawsuits, the snares of wicked men. His legal expenses were horrendous. In the end his cousin’s enemies had a decisive victory in stealing virtually everything for themselves. From an estate possibly valued at two million florins, which included over two hundred villages and hamlets with an annual income of 60 000 florins, Trenck says he received just 3600 florins in three years! In actual fact, in August 1753 he received 80 000 gulden, most of which was used to buy the rights to use the Zwerbach and Grabeneck estates near Melk on the Danube River, 80 kilometres west of Vienna.<sup>31A</sup>

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### ***The 1750 Reprieve***

On 31 May 1749 King Frederick wrote to his Secret State Minister von Danckelmann to inform him he had refused Countess von Lostange’s petition on behalf of her son, Frederick William von der Trenck.<sup>13C</sup> Eighteen months later, in December 1750 to be precise, the Prussian envoy to Vienna, Count Podewils, petitioned the King on Trenck’s behalf. The humble request laid at the feet of the King begged for Trenck’s reprieve. Podewils went on to explain that Trenck had only escaped from Glatz because he believed he had been given a life sentence. With the King’s help he reckoned he could get over 60 000 talers from his uncle’s estate, and appeared quite determined to return to his native Prussia as soon as his pardon was received.<sup>8A</sup> Ten days later the King replied. He was also dissatisfied and was prepared to pardon Trenck provided he lived in Prussia, in complete retirement and never again enter the army.

Understandably Trenck was hesitant: ‘This pardon came to me too late; I had suffered too great an injustice in my homeland and trusted no Prince in the world whose will could annihilate every human right.’ If Trenck was such a malicious character—as many historians wish to paint him—why did the King offer to pardon him? After many powerful men in Vienna, men of high position and rank who placed themselves above the law, had gone on their feeding frenzy and successfully stolen all but a tiny portion of Franz’s estate, Trenck was left almost penniless, without any means of support. He had to accept the commission offered to him as a cavalry captain in the Hungarian cuirassier regiment of Count Cordova. (He was not required to do active duty). So in effect, his desperate financial situation prevented him from returning to his homeland; once again fate continued to inflict cruel

blows on the man who had dared to be the lover of a Prussian Princess.

In mid-1752 King Frederick ordered Trenck's estate *Gross Scharlack*, which had run up large debts while being run by administrators, be handed over to his brother Ludwig Ehrenreich von der Trenck and his heirs as the 'true and hereditary owner.' However, its debts had to be paid off and it had to be restored to good order. This generous gesture by the King was granted to help ease the family's severe financial plight. In April of the following year the King officially recognized Trenck's youngest brother Carl Albrecht as owning half of the *Gross Scharlack* estate.<sup>13B</sup>

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***Recaptured In Danzig, July 1754.***<sup>8A-H</sup>

The death of his mother Maria Charlotte on Christmas Day 1753 led Trenck to arrange a meeting with his two brothers and two sisters to settle her estate. (He actually gave TWO wrong dates in his autobiography for the death of his mother.) The fateful meeting place was to be in Danzig. A little background information is needed to understand what danger Trenck was placing himself in by going to Danzig. From 1713 onwards, as Frederick William I's reign began, the Brandenburg-Prussian army had depended heavily on foreign recruitment. Regardless of whether they were foreign or native born, many men were forced to join the army under duress, if not by more severe means. Once 'recruited' they were, and had to be, prevented from deserting by brutal means which were backed up by severe laws. Deserters were even pursued in foreign lands. In 1749 a new and more severe edict was enacted against deserters. Quite clearly as a deserter Trenck was putting himself in enormous danger by leaving the Austrian domains and going so close to Brandenburg-Prussian territory.

On 12 June 1754 Reimer,<sup>8D</sup> the Prussian Resident in Danzig, wrote to his masters in Berlin that Trenck had come down the River Vistula through Poland, via Krakow to Danzig. He is presumably serving as a cavalry captain in Austrian service, and is constantly seen at the Austrian Resident Abramson's residence. Should he be arrested through the Magistrate, or simply be ignored? And how did Reimer find out Trenck was in Danzig? It appears Trenck's brother-in-law, von Meyerentz, betrayed his presence after Trenck wouldn't or couldn't repay a miserable 200 ducat debt! Meyerentz was not exactly enamoured to his brother-in-law, for he even offered to be involved in his arrest and subsequent escort to Berlin.

The Berlin Foreign Office<sup>8D</sup> had doubts about arresting the Austrian cavalry captain—it could create unpleasant repercussions. On 27 June the King was asked. Two days later he ordered that Reimer 'proceed without the slightest loss of time,' in all secrecy, to prepare the extradition application. The King's 'request' to the Danzig municipal authorities that they arrest Trenck was fully supported by the Danzig City-President Wahl and War-President Ferber. On 02 July, as Trenck and several other people mingled in the Austrian Resident Abramson's garden, the Prussian Resident Reimer and his wife unexpectedly arrived. Foolishly Trenck rejected Abramson's advice 'to disappear quickly,' and instead introduced

himself to Reimer and then told him all about his escape from Glatz. ‘Baron I wish you had not have told me that,’ came Reimer’s reply.

Trenck—as he frequently did throughout his lifetime—once again showed an amazing lack of foresight in making his presence known to the Prussian Resident in Danzig, and by staying in the city for such a long time. For some reason he did not understand the terrible danger he had placed himself in. Was it naivety, downright stupidity, or even arrogance? Trenck was staying in a guest house next door to the Austrian Resident’s house. Near midnight on 05 July his freedom was illegally stolen from him by a captain and eight grenadiers who burst into his room and arrested him. He was taken in a sedan chair to the Katze, a small bastion in the western, fortified quarter of Danzig, where he was imprisoned. Two grenadiers, with bayonets fixed, stood guard over him inside his cell. Quite stupidly, earlier that day Trenck had again met the Prussian Resident Reimer, together with his wife and secretary in the Austrian Resident Abramson’s garden. Very early the next morning Abramson’s protest over Trenck’s arrest was taken by one of Trenck’s servant’s to the City-President. It was rejected. Later that day Abramson again asked the Danzig authorities to hold Trenck until the Austrian Court could meet with its Prussian counterparts.

From his prison cell Trenck wrote to the Danzig War-President.<sup>8E</sup> His imprisonment in the free city of Danzig was a breach of international law. He further asserted that: ‘because of a suspected correspondence’ with my cousin I was ‘not only arrested, but condemned to eternal gaol in the Glatz fortress without even being interrogated or court-martialed.’ Abramson wrote to his Chancellor, Count Kaunitz, in Vienna.<sup>8F</sup> Trenck had come to Danzig to meet with his siblings so they could settle their mother’s estate. He had ‘concealed from no one either his name, rank, nor (his Austrian) service.’ What Abramson wrote after his visit to the Danzig City-President Wahl is most revealing: He affirmed my insinuation that had Trenck’s ‘extradition been refused that daily in the Royal Prussian domains a sharp punishment on’ the Danzig citizens and their ‘goods and people would have occurred.’

Trenck’s servants, a rifleman and a groom, told Abramson their master had spent so much time in Danzig because he had no money, and further that to get to Danzig in the first place he had to sell a gold watch. Max Wilde suggests Trenck’s long stay in Danzig could have provoked the King into thinking he was trying to arrange a rendezvous with Princess Amalie. Of course such a happening would have caused a terrible scandal!

At 11pm on 08 July Trenck was shoved into a secured coach, together with three Prussian non-commissioned officers. Six horses pulled the coach down the dusty, bumpy roads towards Berlin, some 430 kilometres to the south-west. For security reasons, three more Prussian soldiers joined the escort as it travelled through Poland. Fourteen days later, after averaging thirty kilometres a day over rough, pot-holed roads and being taken from garrison to garrison along the way, Trenck’s coach arrived in Berlin ‘under guard of an officer, a non-commissioned officer and four soldiers.’ Then the all powerful King Frederick ordered that the prisoner ‘as early as possible and in all secrecy and under a secure escort be sent to Magdeburg.’<sup>8G</sup> And so by 25 July Trenck was locked up securely in the virtually impregnable Magdeburg Citadel.

An official complaint lodged by the Austrian envoy to Berlin, Count Puebla, received a flippant answer. The King was amazed the honourable Austrian army would accept such a man who had been court-martialed and defamed. However, one thing must be remembered. Danzig was a Free City, indeed a sovereign city-state. And Trenck was an Austrian vassal when he was kidnapped there. Clearly the Prussian King broke international law when he forced the Danzig senate to arrest him!

On 29 June 1754 while still in Danzig Trenck wrote a letter in which he ceded his *Gross Scharlack* estates to his brothers. He signed his name: Frederick Baron von der Trenck, imperial royal cavalry captain. That same year after Trenck's debts were paid off out of the 21 500 gulden obtained from the sale of *Gross Scharlack*'s assets, his two sisters got 1049 gulden, while his two brothers received 6296 gulden each.<sup>13B</sup> Soon after Trenck's arrest in Danzig 500 talers arrived there for him from his sister Frau von Waldow, who had been a widow since 1749. The Prussian Government seized the money. From this sum not only 139 talers were taken out to pay his hotel bill in Danzig, but quite incredibly, 82 talers were also deducted to pay for his arrest and extradition expenses! The remainder was deposited in the Invalid's War Fund. Finally, the King ordered the culprits who had sent the money be subjected to the due processes of the Law.

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### ***Gaoled In Magdeburg***

On 30 July 1754 the King ordered the commander of Magdeburg, Major-general Borcke, to keep Trenck's whereabouts 'as secret as possible' so 'that no one would actually know' where he is. Otherwise, such 'a cunning person' would 'debauch good people.' Do not allow him to speak to or correspond with anyone, nor to receive or send secret letters, nor to get knives or iron implements with which he could either bore into or break things with.<sup>8G</sup>

King Frederick knew almost everything that went on in the Austrian embassy in Berlin. Not only were the embassy's letters opened by the Berlin post office but its secretary Weingarten was a Prussian spy, who was eventually forced to flee the embassy in spring 1756 after he got 'found out.' In August the Austrian envoy to Berlin, Count Puebla, demanded Trenck's release. The Brandenburg-Prussian Government Minister von Pawlowski replied that Trenck was a Prussian vassal who had been gaoled in Glatz: 'because of forbidden correspondence.' Though he had served in the Dutch and Russian armies, he 'to my knowledge never took up Austrian service.' Obviously Pawlowski was lying and well knew Trenck was an Austrian officer.<sup>8H</sup> Also in August, the King ordered that monthly three talers be sent to Magdeburg from the General War Fund for Trenck's upkeep.

Quite amazingly in late September Trenck was able through grenadier George Fuss' wife to get a message to his sister, the widow Frau von Waldow, who lived in Hammer near Landsberg in the New Mark, some 130 kilometres east of Berlin. She courageously and devotedly wrote back: 'My most charming Brother! It appears we were both born unlucky; will God make no end to our grief? I am in distress on your account, I spend day and night

miserable and crying. God will hear my prayers and tears. The request you give me to send money to you and the grenadier I would do with pleasure from the bottom of my soul,' however 'it is forbidden under threat of being gaoled to help even with a thruppence. God knows how it would go for me' if I did send money. 'I sent 500 talers to you in Danzig because your brothers could not quickly get any money. The money was seized by the Prussian Resident and reported to the King. I shall be interrogated next week over this matter... Please have some patience to endure your bad luck and believe that I will carry out the other request that you have given me with all my fortune and strength and I will have no peace until I know I have helped you. This week I will travel to Berlin. If I can only get your detention conditions made easier, then God will help further. Rely on God who doesn't let the innocent be oppressed, and believe from me that I would rather die than known you are sad. I paid the messenger 10 talers.'<sup>8H</sup>

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### ***A Request To The French Government***

In early November King Frederick asked the French representative La Touche whether his Government would be prepared to take a young, intelligent and brave State prisoner who had behaved badly towards him to an overseas French possession. Though neither Trenck's, nor anyone else's name was mentioned, it seems almost certain the request was done on his behalf. Though the French sovereign was happy to help nothing ever came of it. Trenck must have been critically ill around this time. On 11 November Lieutenant General von Bonin wrote to the King from Magdeburg, asking whether the prisoner could write his last will. The reply was short. He has 'nothing with which he could dispose of, as what he had in his fatherland has been confiscated.'

Meanwhile Mrs Fuss had got caught out upon her return to Magdeburg with Frau von Waldow's reply letter to her brother Frederick von der Trenck. On 09 December von Bonin<sup>8J</sup> again wrote to King Frederick to inform him of what had transpired and what he had done about it. A court-martial had already been concluded. Fuss was sentenced to thirty times 'running the gauntlet and to two years breaking rocks,' his accomplice Lindner to twenty-four times 'running the gauntlet' and six months breaking rocks, and Fuss' wife to six months working in a spinning-house. The King confirmed the sentences but to further increase their severity added that they must 'run the gauntlet through two hundred men.' The idea of sending Trenck to a French possession, if indeed he was the one to be sent, somewhere overseas must have been dropped by the King after he received the above report from the Magdeburg Governor, von Bonin.

Meanwhile Frau von Waldow fought for her brother as best she could. As she had promised him she set off for Berlin. On 20 December the King ordered von Bonin in Magdeburg to see that she 'go home at once and never again be seen in either Magdeburg or Berlin,' to stay quietly in her house in the New Mark, and 'abstain from all punishable practices and not to abuse the patience I have shown up till now,' or else. 'Should she have

attempted to or begun to do anything in Magdeburg, arrest and gaol her.’ In the third week of December King Frederick ordered the Berlin commandant Meyerinck to remove her from the city.<sup>5D</sup>

Trenck says his escape plan, which involved the Austrian embassy in Berlin, had been to get money from both his sister and someone in Vienna. However the embassy secretary Weingarten had betrayed him and then stolen his money.\* This betrayal not only led to him being chained up for nine years, but also led to his sister’s goods being plundered, her estates made into desert, her children being reduced to poverty, and finally to her death when just thirty-three years old. I have written elsewhere that King Frederick punished other people by having their properties destroyed, while at the same time ensuring his name was not implicated in the shameful deed. It would be no surprise to me if this indeed did happen to Trenck’s sister.

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A mattress, a bedstead, a small iron stove and a night stool were the only things Trenck says he was allowed in his cell, which was actually a casemate (a gun chamber within a fortress) within the Magdeburg Citadel. For a long time he suffered terribly from hunger, as each day he only received 1½lbs of mouldy bread and a jug of water. Not long after his gaoling Trenck says he began to dig a hole through the wall of the casemate. And within six months he had poured over three hundred weight of earth out through the window. To avoid his work being detected he put the stones and mortar back into place before the weekly inspection of his cell.

The King wrote a long, detailed letter to Lieutenant General von Bonin on 29 April 1755. In spite of all precautions Trenck had conversed with the outside world and had worked on escape plans; his cell must be carefully checked for loose stones and odd holes. And in all secrecy this ‘dangerous and malicious man’ shall be taken to Fort Bergen, where Walrave\*\* is imprisoned, placed in a very secure cell and be ‘riveted hand and foot with chains to the wall.’ All security measures ‘I have ordered must be exactly followed.’ He must be ‘guarded with the greatest care and all communications’ with the outside ‘must be cut off.’<sup>8J</sup>

But what prompted the King to issue the aforementioned orders? What was he afraid of? What did he know about what Trenck was up to? The answer is most likely, plenty! And where did he get his information from? There is no official record that it came from the Magdeburg commander. That leaves one source—Weingarten, the Austrian embassy secretary in Berlin who was a Prussian spy! In late May Weingarten was writing reports to his superiors, which also of course included the Prussian King, that Trenck had written to Vienna and also had a secret correspondence going on with Count Gronsfeld, the Dutch

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\* Volz claims Austrian documents show Weingarten, an Austrian spy, knew nothing of the plot.<sup>8B</sup>

\*\* Major-general von Walrave was gaoled for attempted high treason in February 1748. Trenck says he had a suite of rooms and a yearly allowance of 3000 silver rix-dollars, and the major and officers of the guard dined with him daily.<sup>1</sup>



envoy in Berlin! As security tightened around Trenck his secret letters to (and presumably from) the outside world dried up. By June the Austrian embassy had no idea of his fate and it was not until September that they found out that he was chained up in his new, especially made cell in the Star Fort, as Fort Bergen (or Berge) was also known.<sup>8K</sup>

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### ***Riveted Up In Chains***

On 26 June Trenck was transferred to his specially built cell inside Fort Bergen. Because it was built in a ditch surrounded by high walls which towered over it on three sides, Trenck says in winter when the sun hung low in the sky his world was ruled by eternal darkness. His life was made even more miserable by icy-cold water which incessantly dripped from the ceiling, always keeping him wet. His cell measured eight feet by ten. An enormous chain attached to his ankle was secured to the wall. A huge iron ring, a hand's breadth thick, was riveted around his waist. From it hung a chain fixed to an iron bar. The bar, as thick as a man's arm and two feet long, had a handcuff at each end. The chains so restricted his movements that all he could do was to either jump upwards or swing his arms. In November 1755 the King wrote in his own hand to the new Governor of Magdeburg, Prince Ferdinand: Make sure Trenck remains chained up. The Austrians have already tried to rescue Walrave, so keep a look out for suspicious people visiting Magdeburg.<sup>8K</sup>

Trenck says he smuggled a knife into his cell. Maybe he could use it to cut the locks off the cell's wooden doors. As he forced his right hand through the handcuff, blood spurted out from beneath his nails. He freed his left hand by rubbing away a rivet with a brick. Then by using sheer strength he bent open the hook holding the body-ring to a chain, and then broke the chain attached to his ankle. As he cut through the last of the four wooden doors his knife snapped. Fearing severe punishment, Trenck evolved a plan. He piled up a few bricks he was able to pry free and then barricaded up the doorway. When the guard arrived he threatened to hurl the bricks and to kill himself rather than yield. Only after being assured he would not be punished for attempting to escape did he finally yield.

Trenck says after befriending a sentry named Gelfhardt he was able to obtain money from Vienna, a few small files, and meat and other foods to supplement his meagre diet and help him keep up his strength. After making almost undetectable cuts through his chains, he then covered them up with bread stained with rusty iron. Then he began digging an escape tunnel. After filling long narrow bags with earth, he then passed them through the iron grating to Gelfhardt. Because he had no stove he says he suffered greatly from the cold in winter. Trenck was working hard to effect his escape. On 14 May two of his letters postmarked for Vienna, but strangely routed via Zerbst, were intercepted by a suspicious postmaster. Their contents gave away his escape plan. On 24 June Ruckhard, a former quartermaster in Trenck's cousin's regiment, was to wait with horses and servants in the Saxon border town of Gommern, some three kilometres from Magdeburg and await further instructions. Four days later Trenck was caught red-handed in his cell, out of his chains, and



19. Frederick von der Trenck

working on digging his way out with three knives and a chisel.<sup>8K</sup>

### ***Court-martial, August 1756***

Trenck's repeated escape bids led to a court-martial in August 1756, the judgement being that he be 'riveted-in-irons and held in fortress-arrest for the rest of his life.' As expected King Frederick confirmed the outcome. Trenck did not yield. The official report says he refused to give the name of, and so betray, the grenadier who had helped him.<sup>8K</sup> To inflict further punishment on him Trenck says a heavy iron collar a hand's breadth thick and attached with heavy links to his ankle chains was put around his neck. The collar not only caused him constant pain, but it also immobilized him and made sleep almost impossible. After his bed was removed he was forced to sit on the damp earth and as a consequence he soon developed a burning fever accompanied by terrible headaches.

Yet remarkably Trenck's spirit was still not yet broken! In February 1757 he was found with his neck irons removed. The authorities retaliated by forging on a heavier

set.<sup>15</sup> Trenck says by now even the officers of the guard had begun to feel sorry for him, and so they began to keep him company. He got them on his side by bribing them with money drafts on his estate, for which in return he was given candles, books and food. He was also given a false set of handcuffs and was able to remove his chains whenever he wished, except for the iron collar which stayed put. Once again he hatched yet another escape plan which he says involved him digging a tunnel over a six month period. He had to work at night and naked so his shirt would not be soiled, so as to avoid detection. The severe fatigue from one night's work forced him to rest for the next three days. With the tunnel some thirty-four feet long and with just three feet further to dig a sentry heard him burrowing and so he was caught red-handed. Yet again his chains were overhauled and made heavier. Yet again his bed was removed. Yet again he was attacked by a raging, life threatening fever. Trenck says life didn't get any easier after General Krusemarck arrived at the Star Fort. He told Trenck he had no sympathy for him, as he had tried to gain his freedom by seducing loyal men. A cruel order which lasted four years, was given that the prisoner shall be woken up every fifteen minutes throughout the night!

After yet another failed escape bid Trenck says the new Governor of Magdeburg, the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, showed him great kindness. After he gave his word not to escape while the Landgrave was in charge his neck collar was removed and a stove was installed in his cell. Around this time Trenck began engraving pewter tankards and he also began writing notes in the margins of bibles using his own coagulated blood. In July 1757 Major Rieding<sup>6C</sup> tallied up Trenck's list of expenses in the Star Fort for the previous twelve months. Twice five talers were found on him. Firewood (576 pieces) was supplied. Tea and sugar was discontinued (as a punishment?) in November 1756. His continued illnesses necessitated medicaments, including cough powder, to be constantly given to him in September 1756 and from mid-March until early June 1757. He also got straw for his bed, snuff, black slippers, a 'shawl,' two pairs of socks, a blue coarse-woollen jacket, two bottles, handkerchieves, a night cap, a new bed cover, a pair of cloth pants and three undershirts.

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### ***A Princess Visits?***

During the Seven Years' War (1756-63) Princess Amalie and other members of the Royal Family spent around two-and-a-half years in Magdeburg, 'the last secure place in the kingdom.' Trenck says a friend (obviously meaning Amalie) was able to bribe the guard, secretly visit him and give him 600 ducats. Later on he says this same friend gave the Imperial envoy to Berlin, Baron Reidt, 4000 florins to get him freed.

The Royal Family was first forced to flee to Magdeburg in October 1757. As Berlin was about to be attacked in a lightning raid by 3400 Austrians under General Hadik the Royal Family hurriedly threw a few of their belongings out of the palace windows into the awaiting wagons and boarded their coaches. And what happened as terror gripped all and sundry? According to one eyewitness, Princess Amalie was not only joyful and excited, but she was also dressed up and wearing her diamonds. But why? Only two possible reasons come to mind. Either she had lost her mind, but this suggestion is ridiculous as many people testify to her greatness of mind, as do the letters she wrote throughout her lifetime. Otherwise—as I believe it to be—she was overwhelmed by the thought she was going to Magdeburg where Trenck was imprisoned.

While the Royal Family stayed in Magdeburg, it is known the ladies of the Court visited the prisoners. On 21 August 1759 Princess Wilhelmine, Prince Henry's wife, wrote in her diary that both she and Amalie visited General Walrave in the Star Fort.<sup>8C</sup> General Walrave was to all intents and purposes a much bigger fish than Trenck. So why did the two Princess' not visit Trenck who was also there? Or if they did, why did Wilhelmine not record the event in her highly detailed diary? Perhaps the visit was not recorded for fear of bringing up to the surface an old family scandal? However if they did not, or were not allowed to visit him, what was the reason? Same answer! Trenck was a 'bigger fish' than he appeared to be! The 1744-45 family scandal—the love affair between Princess Amalie and Trenck—had to stay suppressed, and that was that!





20. Trenck's cell in the Star Fort, Magdeburg

In 1760 Trenck sent a few poems and engraved tankards to Amalie. (Two of his tankards were actually listed in the Princess' estate.<sup>10B</sup>) Incredibly on the day of her departure for Berlin in 1762 he also sent her a poem—but how was it possible for a prisoner in isolation to find out such a fact? Perhaps from Amalie herself? He also sent her another poem on her birthday. Volz claims Trenck was simply pleading for mercy from a member of the Royal Family, and nothing more, but under scrutiny that claim does not hold up.<sup>8C</sup>

Trenck's resplendently engraved tankards later became famous. On them he inscribed pleading requests to members of the Royal Family, in particular to Princess Amalie and Queen Elisabeth Christine, that they ask the King to show him mercy. The words engraved on one of his tankards clearly show he had previously sent Amalie a petition or that she had visited him and had promised to intercede on his behalf: 'Great Princess, the danger too often, too much to complain to you, forced me this half year to carry my burden silently. Your magnanimity to misuse, is also a heinous deed, But if Trenck out of melancholy fears that people have forgotten him...' <sup>16</sup>

In the spring of 1759 Trenck wrote in one of his bibles: 'For the last twenty months I have held my word of honour (not to escape) from 01 September 1757 till this hour.' <sup>8B</sup>

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### ***Freed On 29 December 1763***

On 15 February 1763 the Hubertusburg peace agreement ended the Seven Years' War. Though a general reciprocal amnesty for prisoners of war was included in the pact, quite predictably, and hard-heartedly, King Frederick rejected Trenck's inclusion, saying he could hardly believe 'that the Vienna Court would intercede for such a type.'<sup>8C</sup> It seems unbelievable that the great King would still want to further punish Trenck, who had sat in his gaols for almost eleven years! In this instance, he behaved at best like a very *small* King! Six months later Ried, the Austrian envoy to Berlin, asked the Prussian Government Minister Count Finkenstein 'how he could tackle the situation without displeasing the King.' On 18 December Ried met with the King in Berlin and submissively asked for Trenck's amnesty to be considered. So solely and alone out of consideration for the Austrian Empress Maria Theresia's recommendation the order was given to free the 'unlucky Trenck.'<sup>8C</sup>

On 20 December the King said Trenck 'shall be released when he first and foremost swears the customary oath to abjure all vengeance' and be taken directly over my border and never again walk on Prussian soil. The next day the King again spoke with Ried and asserted the point that he 'never experiences anything of Trenck's that is slanderous neither through speaking nor through writing.'<sup>8L</sup>

The indestructible Trenck had spent close to eleven years—nine and a half years in Magdeburg and seventeen months in Glatz—in Frederick the Great's gaols! The Magdeburg commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel von Reichman, wrote Trenck 'yesterday the 29th, after swearing the oath to abjure all vengeance, travelled from here to Prague.'<sup>8L</sup>

Between June 1763 and September 1764 Princess Amalie stayed at the cure resort of Aachen in the vain hope that her fragile health might improve.<sup>17</sup> If she was involved in helping to get Trenck released from gaol, she would have had more freedom to do so in Aachen than in Berlin. Trenck says he bought his freedom by sending the newly appointed Austrian envoy to Berlin, General Reidt (actually Ried), a draft for 6000 florins while one of his relations in Vienna sent another 4000 florins. Previously Trenck wrote that while gaoled in Magdeburg a friend (meaning Amalie) was able to bribe the guard, secretly visit him and give him 600 ducats. Later this same friend supposedly gave Baron Riedt 4000 florins to get him freed. I am sure his 'relation in Vienna' refers to Amalie, but as usual, he kept his references to her as vague as possible so as to protect her reputation.\*

Trenck has constantly been attacked by historians because he did not mention Princess Amalie's name until he published the third volume of his memoirs in 1787, after both Amalie and King Frederick had died. However the oath he had sworn when he was released from Magdeburg would have stopped him talking about them during their lifetimes.

Under a heavy cloud of secrecy Trenck was taken by coach to Prague. As soon as he arrived there he says he was placed under a strong guard, like a common criminal, and

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\*Previously Trenck wrote, that as he sat in Magdeburg, a friend (meaning Amalie) had bribed the guard, secretly visited him and given him 600 ducats. Supposedly later on the same friend bribed Baron Ried to get Trenck freed.

escorted to Vienna where he was again gaoled! He languished in a cell for six weeks before a plot aimed at having him imprisoned for life on the grounds of insanity failed. Supposedly two high ranked officials who had been administrating his estate and stealing money from it were behind the plot.<sup>14</sup> However the official version of what happened when Trenck arrived in Austria is a little different. The Austrian Government had a commitment to keep him not exactly under arrest but in a monastery or similar for a short while. There it was impressed on him strongly that he was forbidden from making either a verbal or written statement about the Prussian King, under the threat of a severe penalty and the highest displeasure of his Empress.<sup>8L</sup> After separate audiences with the Emperor and Empress Trenck says he was forced to renounce all claims to his Austrian cousin Franz's estate. He was then granted a major's commission (in the army reserve where he did not have to do service. His yearly pension was 900 gulden.<sup>31B</sup>) He also was given his full cavalry captain's salary for his time in gaol, of some 8000 florins.<sup>14</sup>

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### **Marriage**

Trenck says he next travelled to the bath-cure town of Aachen to recuperate and ended up staying there for three months. He must have liked what he saw for he later returned there to live. In December 1765 he married Maria Elisabeth de Broë zu Dipenbendt, the daughter of a prominent nobleman who had been the city's mayor. His wife, some fourteen years younger than he, bore him eleven children. Trenck made his living by exporting Hungarian wine to several countries and also for a time ran a newspaper. This last venture because of his outspoken views eventually got him into serious trouble with the Empress and he was forced to shut it down. In 1772 Trenck published the weekly magazine *Der Menschenfreund* (The People's Friend) in which he attacked the established order of society. He described Kings as no more than crowned robbers, and saw the role of the Church as one which maintained the established order and supported Kings as rulers chosen by the grace of God. His severe attacks against the Catholic church led the very Catholic Aachen municipal authorities to ban his magazine.<sup>31C</sup>

People who met Trenck, including the French tourist Louis Dutens,<sup>18</sup> were astonished as to how well he had survived his long imprisonment without any obviously visible consequences. In the author's opinion one thing about Trenck cannot be challenged. Though he was no great courtier—he had far too little tact and was too honest not to express his views—he was without question a man of great courage and incredible willpower! Dutens claims Trenck told him that during the 1745 campaign he had wanted to capture King Frederick, and this had been the reason for his hard incarceration.<sup>16</sup> Whether Trenck really did tell him this only two men know. Whether Trenck intended to capture King Frederick only Trenck knows.

For some time before May 1780 Trenck and his growing family lived in Spa. In September of that year they moved to his Austrian estates of Zwerbach and Grabeneck on the Danube



near Melk, which he had bought in 1753. But fate was never going to be kind to Trenck; he was no farmer. Soon his fortune disappeared and he even went heavily into debt in rebuilding the badly neglected estates. Within six years, after every possible natural disaster had struck, he found himself almost insolvent. Around this time as a means to make a living he began to write his now famous memoirs. That his mind was employed more on his writing than on his farms did not help matters. In 1783 Trenck was knighted in Austria by Maria Theresia.

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### ***A Triumphant Return To Berlin, January 1787***

Much to Trenck's relief, and to the general relief of the people of Brandenburg-Prussia who had also lived under his heavy hand, Frederick the Great died on 17 August 1786. Trenck says he was immediately sent a Royal Passport for Berlin by the new King Frederick William II. On 05 January 1787 he arrived in Prague where he was received with great acclamation. Everybody had read his books and so his visit became a continual round of banquets.

An advertisement placed in the Berlin *Königliche Privilegirte Zeitung* newspaper announced that Trenck's newly written, curious, two volume autobiography with Royal Prussian favour would be available on Saturday 24 January, at all local bookstores for 1 Reichstaler 12 groschen.<sup>19</sup>

On 30 January Trenck, who had already arrived in Berlin, wrote in French to King Frederick William II. He thanked his Majesty for his gracious permission to once again see his brother in East Prussia and the country he had never stopped loving, in spite of all the mishaps it had caused him. He begged his Majesty to grant him the consolation of throwing himself at his feet, and assured him that even in his misery he would forever remain his most vigorous and loving Prussian patriot.<sup>13D</sup>

Trenck again wrote to the King on 09 February. He appealed to his humanity in reacting to his daring at presenting himself in Berlin, and requested an audience at the feet of the King he adored, saying this would compensate him for all his ills.<sup>13D</sup> Three days later Trenck says he received a reply from King Frederick William. He wrote he would have 'great pleasure' in giving him an audience in the Marble Room at 9am the following morning.<sup>1</sup>

Trenck says the King received him with remarkable kindness and presented him to the Court. At their private audience the King asked him many questions about his time in gaol, and in return showed great sympathy. Yet another private audience took place on 11 March at which the King gave Trenck's son a commission in the Pasadowsky dragoons. History records that Leopold, Trenck's seventeen-year-old, second eldest son was indeed made a standard bearer with the dragoon regiment Nr. 6 von Pasadowsky in Königsberg, East Prussia. His exceptionally generous commission, which sometimes took men who ended up becoming some of the highest ranking officers in the army up to seven years army service to attain, immediately placed him above ten other officer cadets!

Leopold's commission was handled as a matter of State. On 17 April the head of the

Secret War Office wrote to the Cabinet Minister Count von Hertzberg: ‘Your excellency I most humbly beg to report that I at once made known to Major-general von Pasadowsky his Royal Majesty’s appointment yesterday of the young von der Trenck to standard-bearer with the Pasadowsky Dragoons, also the commission for the aforementioned von der Trenck has been sent to him.’<sup>6E</sup>

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### ***A Final Meeting With Amalie***

In late March Trenck says he visited Princess Amalie (Cyran says this meeting is historically proven<sup>17</sup>) and spent two hours with her. He wrote: ‘So far as she was able she protected me in my hour of adversity, heaped benefits upon me and more than any other person in the world contributed to my deliverance.’ Amalie asked him to make sure his wife brought her two eldest daughters to Berlin, and promised to remember her in her will. When the audience was at an end Amalie’s parting words to Trenck were: ‘My friend, return quickly. I am always happy to see you.’<sup>1</sup> Within a week of Trenck’s visit Amalie died, on 30 March. The Princess had been waivering on the edge between life and death for more than a decade. I cannot get away from the idea that she waited just long enough to see the man whom she had loved in her youth once more. And after that, well she just faded away.

Trenck says he headed for Königsberg where he met his brother for the first time in forty-two years. There he heard the story of the hatred his siblings had suffered at the hands of the hard-hearted Frederick the Great. Things were happening fast. On 15 May the Brandenburg-Prussian Government Minister Finkenstein ruled that the previous dividing up of Trenck’s estate *Gross Scharlack* on 20 August 1754 by his siblings, as though he were already dead and had no heirs, was illegal. He also ruled that Trenck’s brother Carl Albrecht only had the right to the use and derive income from the estate. On 12 June Finkenstein further ruled that though a title for *Gross Scharlack* was registered in Carl Albrecht’s name, in the Neuhausensche Justiz Collegium Mortgage Book, no legal document existed to support the claim.

Though Trenck had written a letter on 29 June 1754 in Danzig which ceded the estate to his two brothers, it had no legal status (as it was only a letter). So in conclusion, the estate was still legally Trenck’s!<sup>13B</sup> Then on 17 October the East Prussian Government ruled that only the deserter Trenck’s children were able by law to acquire the *Gross Scharlack* estates after their father’s death.<sup>13E</sup>

In the middle of the year Trenck’s nieces, Sophie Charlotte and Maria Wilhelmina von Meyerentz, the daughters of his sister Dorothea Charlotte, petitioned the King to arrest the Imperial Major von der Trenck before he left Prussian territory. You may recall their father informed the Prussian Resident in Danzig that Trenck had arrived there and had even offered to help arrest him and escort him to Berlin. The Meyerentz sisters claimed their mother (who probably died in 1768), had loaned Trenck money in 1747 and in 1754 which added up to (the princely sum of) some 6000 talers. However, after they were unable to produce any evidence to prove their claims, both the Königsberg Court in East Prussia and King Frederick

William II decided they would have to pursue the claim with the Austrian Government. 1787 was indeed a very good year for Trenck! He left Königsberg on 18 June bound for Berlin.<sup>13A</sup>

In 1788 Trenck says he visited Paris to promote his wine business. By this time his writings had made him a famous celebrity throughout Europe. In November of that year he again travelled to Berlin and on the 27th he wrote to the King to request another audience.

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### ***A Remarkably Generous Pension***

In the Government ‘Pardon Files’ within the Secret State Archive in Berlin, Max Wild claims there is evidence that Frederick William II rehabilitated many officers who had been severely dealt with by his predecessor, Frederick the Great. However, men accused of treason or desertion were handled quite separately. In the margin next to their case was always a note which ‘confirmed’ the original sentence. If Trenck had committed high treason it is unthinkable that the new King would have rehabilitated him.<sup>6E</sup> Perhaps the King’s two most notable ‘rehabilitations’ involved the Supreme Court officials involved in the ‘miller Arnold’ case, and Baron Frederick von der Trenck. It is also not unreasonable to suggest that Princess Amalie influenced her nephew into rehabilitating Trenck. After Frederick William became King in August 1786 a local Berlin newspaper records he visited her on her birthday, 09 November, and again in the new year on New Year’s Day, 05 January and 09 March.<sup>6E</sup>

On 13 August 1787 King Frederick William II confirmed to Trenck in writing his granting of a remarkably generous yearly pension of 1200 talers:<sup>6D</sup> ‘Best, Dear, Faithful Follower! Since I granted a yearly pension of 1200 talers to you, so have I also already urged the General War Fund to pay you from your 1200 taler pension three years in advance, and after your death a half of that amount (600 talers yearly) will go to your wife. You had wanted such notification. Your merciful King, Frederick William.’

That Trenck’s yearly 1200 taler pension was exceptionally generous can be proved by two examples. Firstly, Trenck’s cousin Frederick Ludwig von der Trenck (born 1731) served in the Brandenburg-Prussian army for forty-eight years. When he retired in 1797 with the rank of a major-general he got a yearly pension of 1000 talers.<sup>5E</sup> Secondly, Count Frederick Ludwig von Finkenstein joined the Brandenburg-Prussian army in 1727 as an officer cadet. By 1759 he had risen to the rank of a lieutenant general—of which there were hardly more than a handful in the whole army. He remained the chief of his regiment until his death in 1785 and in all served his King for some sixty years. Two years later Frederick William II granted his wife a yearly pension of 400 talers—some 200 talers a year less than Trenck’s wife was guaranteed!<sup>5F</sup>

So to summarize, Frederick William II granted Trenck a pension worth more than that given to a major-general of forty-eight years service and a lieutenant general of some sixty years service! What was the new King trying to make up for? Certainly both Trenck and Frederick William II had one thing in common—they had both been treated abysmally by

Frederick the Great. Trenck's critics would probably give this as the reason for the new King's amazing generosity towards him. But I believe the pension was granted, at least in part, out of sheer compassion for a man who had been so severely treated because he had dared to love a Princess.

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In 1789 John Semmler, a Saxon banker and canvas manufacturer, who claimed to have financially supported Trenck in 1787 so he could also profit through his writings, pursued Trenck to Vienna in an attempt to get him to repay 4300 talers he claimed was owing. Trenck denied the claim and it lapsed after no advocate could be found to prosecute him.<sup>31E</sup> In early 1790 Trenck gained an audience with the new Austrian Emperor Leopold II and got his permission to visit Hungary. Soon after Trenck flooded Hungary with brochures attacking the Catholics, especially the Viennese Cardinal Migazzi, as being responsible for the disquiet among the rebellious Hungarian magnates. He so stirred things up that between 1790 and 1791 over forty papers both for and against his assertions appeared in print. In September 1790 Trenck was ordered to leave Hungary.<sup>31F</sup> At this time Trenck also fruitlessly used great sums of the money he made from his books to again try and regain his cousin's massive Hungarian estates which had been lost some forty years previously.

Letters sent to all powerful, eighteenth century rulers, whether they be Kings, Emperors or ruling Princes always contained volumes of pleading and submissive language. Trenck's letter of April 1791 to King Frederick William II was no exception:<sup>13D</sup>

'Most serene, powerful and most merciful King.

Your Royal Majesty who graciously granted me a pension instead of the restitution of my confiscated Prussian estates, also granted me seven years payments in advance to satisfy my pressing needs. Four years to the 01 August are as of now paid off. But at present I am in need of help more than ever. To the eight (Trenck) children who have lost their inheritance and after my death have nothing to hope for weighs heavily on me; and it always remains hard for an old man who has had to do without his property in his native land for forty-three years... Merciful King! From the pension I give my son who serves in the army 300 talers yearly. The other costs me 600 for his studies, and the last 300 talers I give to my sister's children who through my fate were likewise unfortunate. Consequently I enjoy nothing for myself. And because I receive the Berlin pension I consequently suffer mistrust in Vienna.'

God knows my suffering and my sad days! I yearn for peace in my old age. Therefore I dare again, and throw myself at your Majesty's feet with a plea. And plead still to the paying off to me of the graciously awarded three year advance. In case I have not earned this mercy, I beg you to magnanimously order that I presently be paid two years of the pension in advance up to 01 August 1796.'

Anyway how long shall I enjoy merciful Monarch? I am sixty-six years old and believe that I have earned sympathy and respect in my fatherland. Your Royal Majesty in fact owes me no favour: But my writing quill has already made famous my well known story: but I still

always have cause to sigh and also to cry out loud over the severity of the great Frederick (the Great).’

If you do not send me the three years owing on the pension, then I have to ask for a couple of years of the advance so that I can support my children... If I were not in distress Monarch I would certainly not beg for mercy! The blow which I met in my homeland is incurable. No Monarch can make good my suffering, my lost years... Only traitors confiscated my family estates. This I certainly never was. I have shown the world my true character. And the common cry is... that Trenck is worthy of the mercy of the great William (Friedrich Wilhelm II).’ Your Royal Majesty. Vienna 16 April 1791. Your most subservient and grateful vassal Frederick Baron von der Trenck. Imperial Major.’

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In August 1791 the Austrian Emperor increased Trenck’s pension to 1500 gulden, but in return he had to sign a declaration to completely stay out of Habsburg politics. However, in spite of his promise he soon travelled again to Budapest with his mistress Sophie Kuralt. Though soon after he was placed under house-arrest for three weeks, he was freed under the proviso that he quit the army reserve and pass his pension over to his wife. Almost penniless Trenck left Austria at the end of March 1792. At the time he wrote in a letter he was owed 9000 gulden from book sales and had money invested in a wine shipment he had sent to London.<sup>31G</sup>

Two months before leaving Austria Trenck had sent a letter to King Frederick William II in Berlin, dated 30 January, from his Zwerbach estate. His version of events follow. Though by now he had received five years of payments in advance from his pension, sadly its granting had also given his enemies within the Austrian aristocracy more ammunition to fire at him, so much so that he had to leave for Hungary. There he encountered the same trouble and in the end was forced to discard both his Austrian uniform and his army pension. His mind was becoming focused on living in Paris or London and making his living as a writer.<sup>13D</sup> Trenck’s letter continued. He told the King he was concerned about the future of his two sons. Could his cadet son be given a commission and could his other son in Prussian service be promoted? He had only 1000 talers of his pension left and begged that the two remaining years of advance payments be paid. The pension was his only source of income, the only way he could save both his family and himself in the small time he had left on earth.

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### ***The last refuge in Germany—Hamburg***

In April 1792 Trenck arrived in Hamburg and three months later published the fourth volume of his autobiography. Between July and December he published a twice weekly newsletter called the *Monatsschrift*. A few remarkable examples of his ‘radical’ (for the time) democratic views follow:<sup>31H</sup>

‘Who ever gave to the aristocracy an unlimited right over the welfare, the property, the will,

the life and the strength of the patient unprotected subjects?

If a monarch 'begins an unjust war which runs up debts of one hundred million and also loses 200 000 pugnacious men, then everyone keeps quiet with admiration and deep respect and no one dares to call the conqueror a tyrant. (This refers to Frederick the Great and the Seven Years' War.) But if a repressed people seeks to regain its freedom and its stolen rights by a revolution in which some despots, rogues, or henchmen are bloodied or a few innocents lose their lives, then one hears loud cries of atrocity and violence.'

'Why do we need Kings when the well-being and grief of so many millions of people are dependent on their stubbornness and passion?'

Trenck's *Monatsschrift* was banned in most German regions after its first few issues; it was banned in Brandenburg-Prussia on 31 December 1792. Though in the New Year Trenck changed the newsletter's name to the *Prosperina*, he was finally forced to leave for Paris in early 1793. He arrived in the French capital by ship in early April. But luck was definitely not on his side. Supposedly on the journey English pirates boarded his ship and among other things took his cash and baggage.<sup>31J</sup>

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### ***Death By Guillotine***

France was far from a safe refuge. The brutal French Revolution which had begun in July 1789 was still raging and judicial murder was rampantly spilling the blood of tens of thousands of people, mostly accused of crimes they did not commit. Louis XVI lost his head on 21 January 1793. On 10 March the Revolutionary Tribunal began its terrible work. It was not a time for the Parisians to be interested in odd aristocrats from Germany nor their literary works—everybody was simply too busy just trying to keep their heads attached to their shoulders. By August Trenck was forced to sell his watch and some of his clothing because his money had run out. Around this time he struck up a relationship with a pregnant street prostitute named Louise Pagès.<sup>31K</sup>

The French revolutionaries saw Trenck as a foreigner who had obtained pensions from both Austria and Prussia, both enemies of the people of France. Sadly nobody listened, nor wanted to know, about his democratic views which stretched back as far as his days in Aachen in the early 1770s. Foreigners were looked on as spies for the hated, remaining European monarchies, who could be plotting to restore the hated French Royal Family and the aristocracy. On 11 September Trenck was arrested and thrown into the La Force gaol where he lamented in terrible conditions until 12 January 1794 when he was transferred to the Saint Lazare gaol, where high ranking noblemen and the former King's officers were interred.

Before being interrogated by the Revolutionary Tribunal Trenck handed over a tortoise shell box, which had a thick gold-edged border and contained a portrait of Princess Amalie, to Count Bayluis as a memento.<sup>34</sup> He could have only got such a present from one source—the Princess herself! And so to the very end of his life, in spite of the terrible consequences



he had endured as a result of it, Trenck maintained his love for the Princess he had fallen in love with almost fifty years ago to the very day, way back in late July 1744.

Trenck was accused of plotting to restore the monarchy and of having incited fellow prisoners. While being interrogated he explained his odd life's story. He spoke of his benefactress, the Empress Maria Theresia. When attacked by the public prosecutor on this point he said she had been a 'great Queen,' and then clearly and calmly refuted all the accusations raised against him. Though it was becoming obvious his acquaintances were doomed Trenck could have saved himself with a few words but declined to do so.

On the 25 July 1794 at 6pm at the *Barrière du Trône* in Paris, Trenck stood before his executioner. Yet again—as he had always done—he showed his unbending will and rejected the offer to go first. Instead, he stood with his arms crossed, his eyes focused on the bloodied stage. After twenty-eight heads had fallen, his turn had come. Trenck quickly threw himself into the guillotine, the blade roared downwards and his head rolled into the executioner's sack! Ironically within two days of Trenck's execution the much dreaded, merciless public prosecutor Robespierre lost his head and the Reign of Terror of his Jacobin Party ended, as public sanity got the upper hand. And though many men had tried to break his spirit many times throughout his lifetime, not one had succeeded. Frederick von der Trenck died as he lived, a free spirited 'loose cannon,' which no man could neither contain nor subjugate. Trenck was simply indestructible!

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### ***Trenck's Descendants***

Trenck's son Joseph, Freiherr von der Trenck, who was born in Aachen on 30 October 1766, fulfilled his enormous genetic potential by becoming an Imperial Austrian Lieutenant Field Marshall.<sup>3</sup> Another son Leopold (born 1769) became a lieutenant in the Pasadowsky dragoon regiment Nr. 6 in the Brandenburg-Prussian army. In mid-1809 upon his uncle Karl Albrecht's death he became the second Count von der Trenck. Leopold's son Gustav inherited his title, while another son called Otto became a dragoon major. Throughout the nineteenth century many von der Trenck's continued to serve in the Brandenburg-Prussian army. The most notable were: William Julius (born 1803) who became a lieutenant general; and Henry (born 1782), Albert (born 1850) and Frederick (born 1841) who all became majors.<sup>20</sup> The success of Trenck's immediate relatives brings home to all those who wish to see the enormous potential he had. What he himself could have achieved, had he not incurred the wrath of Frederick the Great by falling in love with his sister Princess Amalie lies in the realm of fantasy.

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## THE GERMAN AND ENGLISH ARISTOCRATIC RANKS<sup>30</sup>

	Germany	England
Higher aristocrats:	Herzog	Duke
	Fürst	Prince
	Graf	(Count)
		Marquess, Earl
		Viscount, Baron
Lower aristocrats:	Freiherr	Baronet

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## BARON FREDERICK von der TRENCK

In this chapter, except where another source is quoted, all information attributed to Trenck—I usually use ‘Trenck says’ to identify it—has been extracted from Trenck’s autobiography.<sup>1</sup>

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3. Zedlitz-Neukirch, p272-73; Supplement: p443-46.
4. *Familiengeschichtliche Blätter*, 1904, p40-42.
5. Priesdorff, *Soldatisches Führertum*. A = p213-15, B = p193-94, C = p349, D = p256-57, p352-53, E = p370-71, F = p404-05.
6. Wild, *Tägliche Rundschau*, 1926: A= Nr 74, B= Nr 75, C= Nr 77, D= Nr 85, E= Nr 86.
7. Mebes, *Beiträge*. Vol. I: p550-553.
8. Volz, *Friedrich der Große und Trenck*. A = p4-13, B = p17-26, C = 30-42, D = p43-52, E = p55-66, F = p67-74, G = p79-84, H = 92-99, J = p100-107, K = p109-116, L = p122-127.
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10. Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Berlin. ‘*Prinzessin Anna Amalia*.’ B.P.H. Rep 46, W98-142: A = in file, B = W130, W133.
11. Gechter, *Nachfahren*. p113-19.
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15. Vogel, *Blutbibel*. p84-91.
16. Schultze, *Friedrich Freiherr*. p7-16.
17. Cyran, *Memoiren*. p359-79.
18. Vehse, *Geschichte*. p223.
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22. Voss, *69 Jahre*. p52-3.
23. Thiébault, *Friedrich der Große*. Vol. I: p182-87, Vol. II: p188.
24. Towers, *Memoirs*. p269.
25. Pangels, *Königskinder*. p372-3, p382.
26. Lehnendorff, *Dreißig Jahre*. Vol. II: p65.
27. Romberg, *Vor Hundert Jahren*, p1-3.
28. Herlyn, *Amalia Schönhausen*. p182-3, and Herlyn, *Stammtafeln Herlyn*.
29. Stradonitz, *Amalie Schönhausen*. p1-6.
30. *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie*, 1980.
31. Grab, *Friedrich von der Trenck*. A = p10, B = p15, C = p16ff, D = p22, E = p26ff, F = p32ff, G = p37ff, H = p42-45, J = p53, K = p58.
32. Bolms, *Trenck’s Geburtshaus*.
33. Geburtsurkunde der St. Marienkirche zu Haldensleben. Special thanks to Detlev Engelcke.
34. Wurzbach, *Biographisches*. p416-20.

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# III

## THE EVIDENCE

### PRINCESS AMALIE AND TRENCK WERE LOVERS

**I**n this chapter I have brought together all the historical evidence my research has uncovered to show Frederick von der Trenck and Princess Amalie were lovers.

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#### *Marwitz*

Frederick August Ludwig von der Marwitz was born on 29 May 1777 in the Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin, the very same street in which Princess Amalie lived. His father, Berndt Frederick August von der Marwitz, first met Amalie's brother Prince Ferdinand, and because Amalie was also there he would have also met her, in Magdeburg in 1759. In the early 1770s he served at the head of the Prince's Court as his major-domo for more than five years. Between 1786 and 1793 he was King Frederick William II's major-domo. Marwitz's mother, Susanne Sophie, was the daughter of the Royal State Minister John Ludwig von Dorville. His cousin was a lady-in-waiting to Prince Henry's wife Wilhelmine. Henry of course was one of Amalie's brothers. It also highly likely the Marwitz family name came from the family estate at Landsberg on the Wartha River, which just happened to be where Trenck's married sister Frau von Waldow, who herself had married into a famous family, lived. It is also highly likely Marwitz's family members still lived there during Frederick the Great's reign and that they had contact with both Frau von Waldow and with Marwitz's parents. Young Marwitz's second wife had formerly been a lady-in-waiting to Queen Louisa of Prussia. Between 1827 and 1831 he himself served at the head of the Brandenburg provincial parliament. He was also a lieutenant general of dragoons who fought against Napoleon's armies.

The picture is complete. Marwitz was in a unique position to find out through his father and other family members what had occurred within the Brandenburg-Prussian Royal Family over many decades, throughout much of the eighteenth century. But perhaps even more significantly his father was Frederick William II's major-domo when the King met Trenck in 1787 and gave him a massive, yearly pension! Of all men, his father would have been in a unique position to have known about his ruler's motives and Trenck's story, and such knowledge he must have passed onto his son.

And what did Marwitz say about the Princess Amalie and Frederick von der Trenck?: 'In her youth at the beginning of his (Frederick the Great's) reign she had an affection to a lieutenant in the *garde-du-corps* (bodyguard), Baron von der Trenck. Because of that she turned down all marriage offers. Frederick II discovered in the Second Silesian War a correspondence between the two lovers and took another correspondence of this Herr von

Trenck with a cousin in an enemy army as an excuse to lock him up in the Glatz fortress. Trenck, an impatient and violent character, deserted from the fortress at the time when his release had already been ordered.’<sup>1</sup>

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### ***An Eyewitness, Finkenstein***

Count Karl William von Finkenstein was King Frederick’s trusted friend and a Minister in his Government for near on forty years. In his youth he had played with the then Crown Prince while his Field Marshal father tutored him. Between 1735 and 1740 Finkenstein was the special envoy to the Swedish Court, though he also spent some time at the Danish Court. In 1747-48 he represented his King at the Russian Court before becoming his Secret Cabinet Minister in June 1749. But why is Finkenstein important in deciding whether Princess Amalie and Trenck were lovers? Because he knew as much as anyone alive about the King Frederick the Great–Princess Amalie–Frederick von der Trenck triangle! Not only did Finkenstein, acting as a special envoy in late July 1744, accompany Princess Ulrike to Sweden after her proxy marriage to the Swedish Crown Prince, but he also stayed at her side in Stockholm until 1746. Trenck claims he met and fell in love with Amalie during Ulrike’s marriage celebrations. The affair is said to have further blossomed as the Princess, accompanied by Amalie, was escorted by Trenck and others of the *garde-du-corps* to Stettin on the Swedish border. If Amalie and Trenck had fallen in love with each other in this time then Finkenstein would have known about it!

Finkenstein was not only officially and directly involved in arranging Trenck’s arrest in Danzig in July 1754, but in the late 1780s he ruled on the legal claims and counter claims with respect to Trenck’s Gross Scharlack estates. Dr Erich Joachim, the Archive Director in Königsberg East Prussia, and Dr Melle Klinkenborg, a state archivist in Berlin expressed their opinion of Finkenstein’s silence: ‘His discretion (secrecy) was unshakeable. Never had he betrayed the secret entrusted to him. Yes he himself evaded the impression of knowing anything.’ And elsewhere: ‘Loyally he had taken the secrets to eternity, no notes at all left behind.’<sup>2A</sup> Finkenstein knew the truth about Amalie and Trenck—that they were lovers—but his silence is deafening!

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### ***Another Eyewitness, Countess Voss***

Countess Sophie von Voss knew Princess Amalie for several decades, and even went with her to Quedlinburg for her installation as Abbess. In her diary Sophie wrote: Amalie ‘whose past passion for the unfortunate Trenck is but too well known... The poor Princess who for the release of the handsome, daredevil adventurer showed so great a devotion and sacrifice, appeared to have exhausted in this single affection her whole love capabilities.’<sup>3</sup> Enough said!

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### ***Another Version***

Thiébault, a French scholar who lived in Berlin from around 1765 to 1786, taught French literature in the military academy and was a professor of literature in the Berlin Academy of Science. He says he met and spoke at length with Trenck in Paris (probably in the early 1790s). Thiébault wrote: ‘the Princess Amalie of Prussia whose love for the Baron Trenck was the source of all the tragedy.’ He says Trenck told him that after his return to Berlin in December 1744 he had ‘secretly’ visited Amalie twenty times, and after each visit had been put under arrest. Then after one four week stint in gaol he was given an order to travel to Vienna on a special mission. When he returned he was again gaoled. Still further, his imprisonment in Glatz occurred because he had sold Prussian fortress plans while in Vienna. Thiébault\* says Trenck’s final release from Magdeburg was organized by Amalie who via a negotiator in Vienna had bribed a servant of Maria Theresia with 10 000 ducats to bring the long suffering prisoner’s plight to the Empress’ attention. Supposedly Amalie had relayed the story to Trenck, who in turn had told Thiébault.<sup>4</sup>

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### ***Princess Amalie, The Godmother Of Trenck’s Child***

On 16 March 1771 in a letter drawn up by a notary Princess Amalie accepted the godparenthood of Trenck’s second child, Karoline Amalie: ‘I congratulate you Sir on the birth of your daughter and as I am always interested in your fate, I accept with pleasure the godparenthood, I assure you that I take part happily in the things you have survived. With high regard. Yours affectionately. Amélie.’<sup>5</sup>

It is not unreasonable to assume Amalie met the child’s mother, the daughter of a prominent Aachen nobleman, during her prolonged stay in that city between June 1763 and September 1764. But so what, she must have met thousands of nobles in her lifetime. That she chose to be a godmother of one of Trenck’s children to my way of thinking has one logical answer. She knew Trenck. The godparenthood can also be seen as a gesture against, and an affront to, her brother Frederick, the King who had so severely dealt with her lover over the previous quarter of a century.

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### ***Princess Amalie’s Personality Change In Her Thirtieth Year***

Why did Princess Amalie’s personality, previously described as being so accommodating and charming, so change and go sour, even at times become scathingly sarcastic, around her thirtieth year? Because Trenck was recaptured in Danzig in early July 1754, that very same year!<sup>6</sup>

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\* After reading Thiébault’s recollections I am of the opinion that his writings are at best unreliable.

***Princess Amalie's Joy At Going To Magdeburg***

Why did an eyewitness observe Princess Amalie behaving in such a joyous state as Berlin was being overrun by an Austrian raiding party in October 1757, and the Royal Family was preparing to flee the city? Because she was on her way to Magdeburg where Trenck was imprisoned!<sup>7</sup>

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***The 'Princess Of Ahlden'***

From time to time throughout my life I have heard of so called 'coincidences' which occur within families, such as similar earth-shattering events happening to a mother and a child. One such striking 'coincidence' occurred within the Hohenzollern family. Amalie's grandmother, Sophie Dorothea of Celle (near Hanover), the so-called 'Princess of Ahlden,' had a tragic love affair with Count Philip Christopher Königsmark. As a consequence her lover's murder was sanctioned by her in-laws and Sophie Dorothea found herself imprisoned in the castle of Ahlden for the remaining thirty-two years of her life! (Her tragic story is told in Book I.) Princess Amalie's affair with Trenck ended up with his imprisonment. Though he spent more than eleven years behind bars, it could easily have been for life. Amalie never married—she probably refused to do so. And only she of ten siblings did not marry. I see no accident in the fact that both Amalie and her grandmother had tragic, life shattering love affairs in their early twenties, in which both their lovers were done away with as efficiently as possible. The striking similarity of these incidents simply adds more weight to the circumstantial evidence that Amalie and Trenck were lovers.

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***Amalie's Portrait Owned By The Trenck Family And Letters From Princess Amalie To Trenck***

In 1926 Max Wilde wrote the Countess Margarethe von der Trenck owned an exquisite painting of Princess Amalie, by the Court painter Pesne!<sup>2B</sup> How could an extremely valuable Prussian Princess' portrait, especially one painted by such a famous and esteemed man as Antoine Pesne was, come into the hands of the Trenck family? The portrait originally had to be the property of the Prussian Royal Family. There seems only two plausible answers. Most likely Princess Amalie, or perhaps Frederick William II, personally gave it to Trenck! And how can one ignore the statement of Dr Karl Walter<sup>8</sup> in 1930 to Prince August William that Count Gustav von der Trenck\* had letters written by Princess Amalie to Trenck?

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\* Correspondence with Gustav's descendants in 1996 revealed the Trenck's East Prussian estates were overrun by the Russians in 1945 and that virtually all family archival material and treasures were lost. The present generation knows nothing of the Pesne portrait, however it is well-known the Russians took countless numbers of German art treasures at the end of World War II. The Trenck descendants knew nothing of Amalie's letters to Trenck.



### ***A Contemporary Opinion In 1795***

Throughout my research I endeavoured wherever possible to get contemporary views on what occurred in Trenck's life. In 1795 Joseph Towers wrote: Trenck's 'sufferings which were inflicted upon him without any trial, either civil or military, and his innocence of any criminal correspondence with the Austrians, appears now to be universally believed throughout the Prussian dominions, and even at the Prussian Court.'<sup>9</sup> This statement MUST be correct, or King Frederick William II would not have rehabilitated him! So if there wasn't any criminal correspondence with the Austrians why was Trenck locked up? Simple! Because of his love affair with Amalie!

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### ***Reparations Made To Trenck's Family***

Why did Frederick the Great's successor Frederick William II rehabilitate Trenck in such an incredibly magnanimous way? Why was he granted an enormous yearly pension of 1200 talers for life, of which his wife would still receive 600 talers a year after his death?<sup>2D</sup> In comparison, the widow of a lieutenant general with some sixty years service received just 400 talers a year.<sup>10</sup> And why was his brother Karl Albrecht made Count von der Trenck in June 1798 by Frederick William III? It seems difficult not to conclude that both Trenck and his family were being compensated for the unfair treatment they had suffered at the hands of Frederick the Great.

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### ***The Tortoiseshell Box***

Before he was guillotined in Paris in 1794 Trenck handed over to Count Bayluis an obviously expensive, thick gold bordered, tortoiseshell box containing a portrait of Princess Amalie.<sup>11</sup> And where did he get it from? The answer must surely be from Princess Amalie herself! And so to the very end of his life Trenck held close to his heart the memory of a love that had begun, almost to the day, fifty years ago! Is this not the most striking circumstantial evidence one could find that Princess Amalie and Baron Frederick von der Trenck were lovers?

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### ***Why Did Frederick the Great Punish Trenck?***

When Trenck was thrown into Glatz in June 1745 the Second Silesian War was raging. Had the war been lost Brandenburg-Prussia could have been obliterated and its King would have lost his throne, if not his head. Any spies at the King's side, as his *garde-du-corps* and Trenck were, would have seriously threatened the campaign. Had Trenck to the King's knowledge committed high treason he would have been court-martialled in mid-1745. But the court-martial only took place after Trenck had escaped from Glatz in November 1747, when he quite rightly was charged with desertion. During King Frederick's reign the trial

process against junior officers like cornets, as Trenck was, was always dealt with quickly. They were simply 'locked up, tried and sent packing.' So why was Trenck treated differently?<sup>2c</sup> Because Trenck had got the King's little sister pregnant?

In the late 1740s Trenck served in the Russian army, and that in itself was a treasonable offence under Prussian law. While in Moscow he foolishly showed around a miniature sketch of Princess Amalie at the Russian Court, and this could have enraged her brother the King.<sup>4</sup> However, both these incidents occurred before King Frederick's offer to pardon Trenck in 1750, so the King must have considered them to be unimportant.

Possibly, King Frederick's attitude towards Trenck hardened after he became an officer in the Austrian army, Prussia's mortal enemy, in the early 1750s. After Trenck's recapture in Danzig in July 1754, even if he had wanted to, the King was unable to execute him for fear of retaliatory action by Austria against captured Prussian officers. However, it is more likely that King Frederick's attitude changed after Trenck stayed too long in Danzig. But why? Because the King believed Trenck was trying to arrange a rendezvous with Princess Amalie. And at all costs a public family scandal had to be prevented!

King Frederick himself had at least one significant love affair before he was forced by his father to marry, and that was with a married woman, Eleanore von Wreech. Perhaps that affair motivated him to abolish all laws against fornication and unwed motherhood. At Court he also protected any unwed women who became pregnant. Years later during one of his wars, an alleged lover of Frederick, possibly a daughter of General Schwerin, was captured during an attack on his camp near Soor.<sup>12</sup>

However, in the 1740s, when it came to his sister Amalie's affair with Trenck, the King had to protect his family's name and his sister's reputation. In European politics Princesses were simply used as political 'pawns,' to be married off to weld an alliance between two Royal Houses. As a Princess of marriageable age Amalie's 'duty' was to marry a European Prince, not an insignificant officer in the King's bodyguard. King Frederick—who himself had often mocked the lifestyle and circumstances at many other European Courts—had no intention of his family becoming the laughing stock of Europe. Not only did he do what was necessary to keep Trenck away from his sister, but he also kept the affair as secret as he possibly could.

Let us not be mistaken. King Frederick was an absolute and ruthless autocrat. Like many great and powerful men both before and after his time, he used his peasants as *cannon-fodder* to fight his wars of conquest for his own glorification. When Trenck got involved with his sister he eliminated him as efficiently as the Law allowed by gaoling him. Lehndorff knew his King was ruthless and much feared among his subjects. He described the suicide of a cavalry major, a Herr von Schack, who apparently because the King had treated him so badly at the previous year's manoeuvres was so instilled with fear that it could be repeated again that he committed suicide. King Frederick was no angel.<sup>13</sup>

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### ***Trenck The Author***

Apart from printing a newspaper in Aachen which got him into trouble after he attacked corrupt priests and the like in his inimitable, direct way, Trenck also published a *Collection of Miscellaneous Poems* in the late 1760s. This was followed in the mid-1770s by *Amorous Poems of a Prisoner*, and his autobiography *Merkwürdigen Lebensgeschichte* (Strange Life-story) in the mid-to late 1780s. In the preface to his collected works he painted a glowing description of Amalie: ‘This great authority of real merit had revealed to me in (my) tragedy, in the deepest sludge of human degradation, everything possible at the time of her compassion, her mercy and attention... She herself had obtained the light of freedom for me.’<sup>14</sup> In 1767 Trenck published a book of poems. One read: Amalie ‘does your arm still hold a shield for me, are you still concerned for me? Or has Frederick’s rage smashed your generosity? But have you done nothing, and for me up to now kept silent? Oh! so attack the work so as to help me in my decline to triumph!... Consequently protect one that fate here has deserted.’<sup>14</sup>

In his memoirs Trenck only referred in passing to his Berlin lover as ‘a high-positioned lady’ who had fallen in love with him. His other references to her are infrequent, vague and even oblique. Indeed it was not until the third volume of his memoirs was published after both King Frederick and Princess Amalie had died that he revealed his lover’s identity. Cynics say Trenck only mentioned Amalie’s name after the other two key players in the drama, King Frederick and Amalie had died, because dead men can’t speak. And so Trenck could make his claim without them discrediting him. However, I do not believe that. He waited for two reasons. Firstly, out of respect for the woman he had fallen in love with so as to avoid Amalie being exposed to a scandal and the subsequent embarrassment that would befall her. Secondly, when he was released from Magdeburg he swore an oath of silence which he was duty bound to keep as long as Frederick, and possibly Amalie, lived. This oath would have included a clause preventing him from exposing his affair with Amalie. In conclusion, it should not surprise anyone that Amalie did not leave behind any evidence of her love affair with Trenck. She was a strongly Calvinistic Prussian Princess, and as such would have done everything necessary to keep their affair secret.

In the State Archive in Berlin there is a massive collection of some of the letters exchanged between Amalie’s grandmother, Sophie Dorothea of Celle and Count Königsmark. (Their tragic story is told in Book I.) Frederick the Great’s handwriting appears on the outside of the file, so it is reasonable to assume he read through it. With this knowledge, he would have made sure—to prevent his family becoming the laughing stock of Europe—that any letters he could find between his sister Amalie and Frederick von der Trenck were destroyed.

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### ***Amalie’s ‘Silent War’ With King Frederick in March 1745***

Twelve days after King Frederick and his *garde-du-corps*, together with Trenck as part of the bodyguard, returned to war in mid-March 1745 Princess Amalie wrote to her brother

Frederick: 'I can no longer deprive myself of the pleasure of paying homage to you. My duty, my inclination and my affection, all three combined, could no longer endure this silence. It has been worse for me, as the only remaining consolation for me lies therein, in being allowed to put letters at your feet.'<sup>15</sup> This letter raises interesting possibilities. Why were Amalie and Frederick having a 'silent war' at this very time? It most certainly could have been to do with Frederick gaoling Trenck and forbidding his love affair with Amalie from going any further! Amalie writes of a desperate situation, that her only remaining consolation was to be able to write to her brother. Her 'only remaining consolation' from what? From a broken heart because she was no longer allowed to see Trenck? Reading between the lines the answer is clear. Further, a strictly religious Calvinist Prussian Princess like Amalie would say no more—the affair had to remain as secret as possible.

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### ***Amalie Meets Trenck Just Days Before Her Own Death***

In late March 1787 Trenck says he visited Princess Amalie and spent two hours with her. (Cyran says the meeting is historically proven.<sup>12</sup>) He wrote: 'So far as she was able she protected me in my hour of adversity, heaped benefits upon me and more than any other person in the world contributed to my deliverance.' Amalie asked him to make sure his wife brought her two eldest daughters to Berlin, and promised to remember her in her will. When the audience was at an end Amalie's parting words to Trenck were: 'My friend, return quickly. I am always happy to see you.'<sup>1</sup> Within a week of Trenck's visit Amalie died, on 30 March. The Princess had been waivering on the edge between life and death for more than a decade. I cannot get away from the idea that she waited just long enough to see the man whom she had loved unconditionally in her youth once more. And after that she just faded away.

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## **THE EVIDENCE, PRINCESS AMALIE AND TRENCK WERE LOVERS**

1. Marwitz, *Aus dem Nachlaße*. p18-19.
2. Wild, *Tägliche Rundschau*, 1926: A = Nr 86, B = Nr 74, C= Nr 75, D=Nr 85.
3. Voss, *69 Jahre*, p52-53.
4. Thiébault, *Friedrich der Große*. Vol. I: p182-87, Vol. II: p188.
5. Volz, *Friedrich der Große*. p 30-42, p122-127.
6. Rohdich, *Friedrich Faszination*, p64.
7. Thiébault, *Original Anecdotes*. p278-90.
8. Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Berlin. 'Prinzeßin Anna Amalia' B.P.H. Rep 46 W98-142.
9. Towers, *Memoirs*. p269.
10. Priesdorff, *Soldatisches Führertum*. p404.
11. Wurzbach, *Lexicon*. p401-28.
12. Cyran, *Memoiren*. p359-79.
13. Lehnendorff, *Dreißig Jahre*. Vol. II: p65.
14. Schultze, *Trenck und Amalie*. p7-16.
15. Kleinschmidt, *Geschichte*. p283.

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## IV

# PRINCESS AMALIE AND FREDERICK von der TRENCK'S LOVE-CHILD

This chapter details my eighteen-month search of European archives from Finland, Latvia, Switzerland, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg, East Friesland, Saxony and many other German states for the love-child of Princess Amalie and Baron Frederick von der Trenck. I believe the primary reason Trenck got thrown into gaol in the Glatz fortress by Frederick the Great is because he got the mighty King's youngest sister Princess Amalie pregnant!

As part of King Frederick's *garde-du-corps* (body guard) Trenck returned to Berlin on Christmas Day 1744 and did not return to war with his King until 15 March 1745. Logic says Trenck did not get Amalie pregnant when they first met in July 1744 during the festivities to celebrate the marriage of her sister Ulrike, or the King would have thrown him in gaol in early 1745 after Amalie's pregnant state became obvious.

If Amalie did conceive in late December 1744, say on New Year's Eve, she could have given birth as early as seven months later if one considers what happened to Prince Ferdinand's wife, who in May 1770 'exactly seven months after her giving birth to a Prince brought a Princess into the world.'<sup>1C</sup> Amalie's child would have been born between July and December 1745. I suspect that after it was born it could have been adopted out to one of her close relatives or to an aristocratic family.

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### ***The Royal Options:***

(1) The Margravine Philippine Auguste Amalie,<sup>2</sup> born on 10 October 1745, was officially the daughter of Amalie's sister Sophie and Frederick William, the Margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt. Her four siblings were all born in Schwedt, where both their birth and christening details were registered; interestingly, though Philippine's birth and christening details were mentioned in the Berlin newspapers, neither were registered in the churches of Schwedt nor in nearby Berlin! But why not? Perhaps she was not Sophie's child? After her mother's death in November 1765, Philippine lived half the year with her uncle Prince Ferdinand until she married the old Landgrave of Hessen-Kassel on 10 January 1773. In 1777 the Englishman Wraxall described Philippine as one of the most beautiful women in Germany. She died on 01 May 1800. Clearly Philippine is born in the right time frame to have been a child Amalie could have conceived with Trenck.

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(2) The Margravine Friederike Charlotte Leopoldine Louise was born on 18 August 1745 in Berlin, according to her birth and christening details published in the Berliner Spensersche Zeitung newspaper. Her supposed parents were Leopoldine Marie, the daughter of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau and Frederick Henry, the Margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt.<sup>2</sup> As was common in the Hohenzollern family, Friederike's parents marriage resembled a war zone. Soon after their bitter separation in May 1751 the six-year-old's hard-hearted father sent her to Herford, far away from home. And from that time on she was forbidden, under the threat of being disinherited if she did so, from ever seeing her mother Leopoldine again. Sadly, Leopoldine was exiled to Kolberg in Pomerania where she lived an impoverished, unhappy existence. Under King Frederick's exact instructions she was kept there under house arrest in a run down government building. But not even with her death did her punishment and complete humiliation end, because five years after she died her body was exhumed from within the Kolberg cathedral and buried in an unmarked grave.

Friederike remained unwed and became the Coadjutress to Herford in March 1755. In October 1764 she became its Abbess. (Interestingly, Amalie had also remained unwed, and had been a Coadjutress to Herford!) During her reign as Abbess, the Margravine Friederike found herself surrounded by unscrupulous and cheating officials. Eventually several of them were brought to trial, prosecuted and gaoled by the State.<sup>3</sup> She died on 23 January 1808. Clearly Friederike is born in the right time frame to have been a child Amalie could have conceived with Trenck.

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### ***Another Option:***

Louisa Wilhelmine Amalia Benda, the daughter of Franz Benda, the Royal Court musician and his wife Eleanora, nee Stepheny, was born on 15 July 1745 in Potsdam. She was christened in the Berlin cathedral nine days later in the presence of, among others, the Princess of Prussia and Princess Amalie.<sup>4</sup> Quite strangely her twin brother Frederick William was christened four days before her in the St Petrikerche Church in Berlin in the presence of the King, two Princes, the Queen, and the Queen Mother. Sadly Louisa died in the first year of her life from smallpox.<sup>5</sup>

Why was Louisa not christened with her brother? Perhaps she was sick? Perhaps she wasn't Benda's child? She certainly was born in the right time frame to be a child Princess Amalie could have conceived with Trenck, though I doubt she was. The Bendas had another set of twins, which adds weight to the argument that Louisa was their child.

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### ***Amalie's Court Ladies:***

I thought it possible that when the daughter of Princess Amalie and Trenck reached her mid-teens she could have joined her mother's Court. So after adding fifteen years onto her birth in the second half of 1745, I started looking for the ladies-in-waiting who joined Amalie's



Court after 1760. It became an extremely difficult task to actually identify each of them, as both official Government documents and most contemporary writers rarely, if ever, mentioned their first names. The aristocratic ladies\* were:

(1) Fräulein Louisa Sophia Wilhelmine von Podewils became one of Amalie's ladies-in-waiting in 1763 (or perhaps even earlier) when she was just seventeen. She remained in her service until 1776. I tracked her identity down in the following way. Count Ernest Ahasverus von Lehndorff—to whom Prussian history owes a great debt of gratitude for his extensive diary entries made over a thirty year period while he served the Royal Family—was born on 07 May 1727 in Landkeim, Prussia. One of his four sisters married into the von Podewils family.<sup>6,1D</sup> In May 1763 Lehndorff wrote in his diary that Amalie was leaving for Aachen with 'Frau von Maupertuis, Frau von Bonin, my niece Fräulein von Podewils and Herr von Rauschenblatt.'<sup>1F</sup> Again in August 1771 he mentioned his niece as part of Amalie's Court.<sup>1H</sup>

Constantin Guido von Podewils, a Prussian major-general and interim commander of Stettin and Countess Sophie Dorothea von Lehndorff, married in 1744. It was their eldest surviving daughter Louisa, born on 25 October 1746,<sup>7,8</sup> who served in the Princess' Court. Clearly Louisa was not a child Amalie could have conceived with Trenck.

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(2) Fräulein Anna Charlotta Ernestina Louisa von Hertefeld (or Hartenfeld) was one of Amalie's ladies-in-waiting from 1769 (perhaps even from the mid-1760s when she was in her early twenties) until she died in April 1770. She was baptized on 18 December 1745 in the Berlin Cathedral. On her burial certificate, dated 22 April 1770, with one of her names written as Mariana and not Anna, she is described as a 'twenty four year old lady-in-waiting by Her Royal Highness the Princess Amalia.'<sup>9</sup> Her father Baron Ludwig Casimir von Hertefeld was the son of the wealthy Samuel von Hertefeld, who had been a senior official of Amalie's father, King Frederick William I. Between 1750-57 Ludwig was Queen Mother Sophie Dorothea's chamberlain. His wife Louisa Susanna, the sister-in-law of King Frederick's famous chancellor von Cocceji, was the daughter of General von Beschefer.<sup>10</sup>

Though finally succumbing to consumption, Anna could have died from a broken heart after being betrayed by Baron Edelsmann. Though not exactly a beauty, Lehndorff says she had charm and was amusing. She had a brown complexion, beautiful black eyes and was somewhat stilted.<sup>1C</sup> Clearly Anna was born in the right time frame to have been a child Princess Amalie could have conceived with Trenck.

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(3) Fräulein Wilhelmine von Zerbst, one of Amalie's ladies-in-waiting from December 1770 until the Princess' death in March 1787, was extremely difficult to identify. In August

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\* The Berlin Address-Calendar did not mention Amalie's Court until 1769, so before this time it is difficult to find exactly when various ladies-in-waiting joined her Court.

1809 she was living on the Melschoff (actually Melkof) estate, near Wittenburg in Schwerin,<sup>11</sup> with her married sister Christiane. Her brother-in-law Markwart David von Pentz was not only a Royal Waldeck major general, Court steward and equerry, but also a (mercenary) Dutch lieutenant general.<sup>12,13</sup>

Some forty-four years earlier, in November 1765, Peter von Biron, the Hereditary Prince of Kurland and Semgallen and his young wife, Princess Karoline Louise of Waldeck, had visited Potsdam. They were accompanied by two Fräuleins von Zerbst, the elder possessing much intelligence and the younger much beauty.<sup>14A</sup> This must have been when Princess Amalie first met Fräulein von Zerbst. When Wilhelmine von Zerbst joined Amalie's Court in December 1770 Lehndorff says she arrived directly from Lausanne (in Switzerland), after living there for three years with the (by now) Duchess of Kurland. Though 'pretty, tall, thin and weakly' she 'possesses intellect and very good manners, and people close to her say she has an excellent character.'<sup>14B</sup>

The Fräulein's parents were Carl George Adolph von Zerbst, the Waldeck Government President and Antionette Wilhelmine von Ziegler. Interestingly, their fifth born of seven daughters, Maria Amalia, was christened on 05 June 1745, around the time Princess Amalie could have given birth to Trenck's child. Depending on which information you accept as correct, she was either buried in May 1747, or she married a Zerbst equerry. Princess Amalie's lady-in-waiting was actually Wilhelmine von Zerbst, who was christened on 01 October 1747 in Arolsen.<sup>13</sup> Clearly Wilhelmine was not a child Princess Amalie could have conceived with Trenck.

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(4) Countess Amalie Sophie Henriette von Redern was one of Princess Amalie's ladies-in-waiting from around 1777, when she was twenty-four, till the early 1780s. Her father Sigmund Ehrenreich von Redern was made the Queen Mother Sophie Dorothea's chamberlain in 1743 and her major-domo in 1751. In 1757 he became a Count. Back in December 1748 Sigmund had wed the wealthy heiress Fräulein Marie d'Horguelin. Their daughter Amalie, born on 08 June 1753, left Amalie's Court in the early 1780s to marry the Royal Sardinian envoy to Berlin, Count von Fontana. In Easter 1782 Fontana began renting most of the Princess' Unter den Linden palace for 750 talers a year.<sup>15B,16</sup> Clearly Countess Amalie von Redern was not a child Princess Amalie could have conceived with Trenck.

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(5) Countess Sophie Dorothea Henriette von Schwerin, born in Wolfshagen in the Ückermark (not far from Berlin) on 05 Dec 1764, was the daughter of Count Otto Alexander von Schwerin and Sophie Dorothea von Bissing. She left Amalie's Court just before she married the wealthy Count Bogislav Frederick Carl Ludwig von Dönhoff on 17 July 1784. Friederich the Great compared Sophie's beauty with that of the legendary Helen of Troy.<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, Dönhoff's mother was the eldest daughter of Eleanore von Wreech who had

born a love-child to Amalie's brother, Frederick the Great.<sup>18</sup> Quite clearly Sophie was not a child Amalie could have conceived with Trenck.

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(6) Countess Emilie Alexandrine von Dönhoff became one of Amalie's ladies-in-waiting in mid-1784 when she was just fifteen-years-old. She remained in her service until the Princess' death in March 1787. The daughter of the Royal Prussian Government Minister Count August Christian Ludwig Karl von Dönhoff, she was born on 17 June 1769. Emilie married the Royal chamberlain Count Otto Alexander Henry Dietrich von Keyserlingk in June 1791.<sup>19,15A</sup> Clearly she was not a child Amalie could have conceived with Trenck.

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### ***One More Possibility:***

Amalia Schönhausen lived most of her life in Jennelt, a small village just north of Emden in the small Brandenburg-Prussian province of East Friesland. In August 1769 she married Philipp Herlyn and subsequently bore him five children. She died on 29 Nov 1811. Hans Herlyn set the cat among the pigeons when he claimed Amalia's age, given as 'thirty-two' on her marriage certificate, had been falsified to hide her real identity as the illegitimate daughter of Princess Amalie and Frederick von der Trenck. Amalia's birth, worked back from her marriage certificate, was between September 1736 and August 1737. Herlyn further claimed her age was also falsified on her death certificate. Supposedly his evidence came from a Pastor Lüpkes, the minister in Jennelt from the 1860s till at least 1912, who had formed his conclusions after talking to many people who had known Amalia.<sup>20</sup> John Gechter claims documents left to posterity by Amalia Schönhausen were burnt in the 1870s by her granddaughter Sike Ihnen, nee Rifius, 'to erase the family stigma.'<sup>21</sup> He further asserted the Ihnen descendants frequently told him 'we also descend from the Hohenzollerns.'

Gerriet Scherz has a more plausible account of the mystery surrounding the birth of Amalia Schönhausen. He writes she was the illegitimate daughter of the widow Charlotte Luise von Knyphausen and Count Curt Christoph von Schwerin—the great Field Marshal who died during the siege of Prague in 1756. Apparently the heartless King Frederick William I had rejected the couple's request to marry and had even imposed a fine on the good lady. Charlotte, the daughter of the Government Cabinet Minister Henry Rüdiger von Ilgen, was the widow of the Prussian Minister of State Frederick Ernst zu Inn- und Knyphausen, who died in 1731. Scherz's account seems logical. As tradition dictated, Amalia Schönhausen named her first son Frederick Ernst after her mother's husband! The aristocratic Knyphausen family owned Jennelt and there is proof that Charlotte herself lived there. After Amalia married, her mother, with her son-in-law von Keith acting as an intermediary, gave her a dowry. Amalia's surname Schönhausen supposedly came from the town of the same name in Havelland.<sup>22</sup> (My extensive enquiries in East Friesland and in Schönhausen on the Elbe River failed to find Amalia's birth certificate.) Clearly Amalia Schönhausen was not a child Amalie could have conceived with Trenck.

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***So Who Was The Illegitimate Child Of Princess Amalie And Baron Trenck?***

I have been a professional astrologer for over fifteen years. I did weeks of astrological research on the birth charts of the Margravines' Philippine and Friederike, together with Fräulein von Hertefeld. I compared each of their birth charts with their parents' charts and with those of Princess Amalie and Frederick von der Trenck. Then I researched all their death charts.

I have decided not to present my extensive astrological research in this manuscript because of the prejudice which I would encounter by doing so. However, I will give my conclusion. I am convinced from my research that the Margravine Friederike was the child of Princess Amalie and Frederick von der Trenck.

Interestingly, there is a list of similarities between the lives of Princess Amalie and the Margravine Friederike:

- (a) Both Amalie and Friederike died when they were sixty-two years old. How often do you hear of a parent and a child dying when reaching the same age?
- (b) At Friederike's christening in the Berlin Cathedral, on 02 September 1745, the witnesses included the Queen, the Queen Mother, the Grand Prince of Russia, together with many Princes and Princesses. However, Amalie was conspicuous by her absence.<sup>8</sup> But why? Perhaps she was unable to cope with the christening of her child, if indeed Friederike was her child?
- (c) When she was just eleven years old Amalie was made a Canoness and Coadjutress of Herford. She relinquished these posts in December 1744, when she was postulated as the Coadjutress of the larger, more important abbey of Quedlinburg.<sup>23,24</sup> Friederike also became the Abbess of Herford!<sup>2</sup>
- (d) Neither Amalie nor Friederike married.
- (e) When Friederike was just six years old her legal parents had a bitter separation. (See earlier in this Chapter for full details.) From that time on she never saw her mother again. Her father then got rid of her by sending her away to Herford. But why? Maybe she wasn't his child?

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When one closely looks at the paintings of Baron Frederick von der Trenck and the Margravine Friederike, remarkable similarities can be seen with respect to their diamond-shaped eyes, the way the ends of their lips turn up, their hook noses, their foreheads, jawlines and ear lobes. Could the paintings show a father and his daughter? Absolutely!



21. Margravine Friederike

The Margravine Friederike Charlotte's parents were supposedly Leopoldine Marie, the daughter of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau and Frederick Henry, the Margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt. However, I have little doubt she was the daughter of Princess Amalie and Frederick von der Trenck.



22. Frederick von der Trenck



### AMALIE AND TRENCK—SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

DATE	EVENT
17 July 1744	Ulrike's marriage celebrations, Amalie and Trenck fall in love.
13 August 1744	Trenck goes off to war with the <i>garde-du-corps</i> .
16 December 1744	Amalie is made Coadjutress of Quedlinburg.
24 December 1744	Trenck returns to Berlin with the <i>garde-du-corps</i> .
15 March 1745	Trenck goes off to war again.
28 June 1745	Trenck is arrested and gaoled in Glatz.
26 November 1746	Trenck escapes from Glatz.
06 July 1754	Trenck is arrested in Danzig, then gaoled in Magdeburg.
11 April 1756	Amalie is installed as the Abbess of Quedlinburg.
15 October 1757	Amalie and the Berlin Court escape to Magdeburg. The Royal Court does not return to Berlin until early January 1758.
March 1760	Until August 1762, Amalie and the Royal Court stay in Magdeburg.
29 December 1763	Trenck is freed from gaol in Magdeburg.
March 1771	Amalie becomes the godmother of Trenck's second daughter.
March 1787	Amalie and Trenck meet again.
30 March 1787	Amalie dies at 3pm in Berlin.
25 July 1794	Trenck dies by the guillotine at 6pm in Paris.

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## PRINCESS AMALIE AND FREDERICK von der TRENCK'S LOVE-CHILD

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## V

# BARON FRANZ von der TRENCK

**B**aron Franz von der Trenck was Frederick von der Trenck's first cousin. He is mentioned quite a bit by Trenck in his autobiography, which is summarized in Trenck's chapter. I find it impossible to leave him out of my manuscript because he had such an incredible life.

Franz von der Trenck, the cold-blooded colonel of Pandours in the army of the Austrian Empress Maria Theresia, has been portrayed by history as being cruel, even ruthless. As the leader of a band of barely civilized Croats, who whenever opportunity knocked could turn into rapacious, brutal savages, he simply had to be to survive. Franz was a fearless warrior, an extremely competent leader. He was also a huge man, a handsome man, a seducer of women. Both he and his fellow Pandours were hated and feared by their enemies. But why? Because they didn't play war according to the etiquette of eighteenth century warfare; they fought like twentieth century guerilla fighters, forever snapping at the heels of their victims, breaking their spirit, terrifying their hearts, cutting them down, stealing their provisions and leaving their stomachs empty.

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Fate had brought Franz's father to Austria in 1683. That year as the Turks laid siege to Vienna, the Imperial army came to its defence. Among the 2000 or so troops sent by the Elector of Brandenburg to help defend the Holy Roman Emperor was Lieutenant Baron John von der Trenck. After the Turks were defeated, John decided to stay behind in Austria. In his homeland his prospects looked slim because his elder brother had inherited the family estates in Prussia. And not only that, his prospects for advancement looked far better in the larger Austrian army. John's gamble paid off a thousandfold. After serving under Prince Eugene in the campaigns against the Turks his services were well rewarded when he acquired large land holdings in Slavonia. His third son Franz, born on 01 January 1710 (some historians say 1711), got a taste for warfare early on in life. When he was barely seven years old his father dragged him off to Hungary, where a new war had broken out against the Turks. The campaign went well for the Imperial troops and the Infidels were driven back. At first hand Franz bore witness to the Austrian's merciless, cold-blooded handling of their prisoners and the peaceful Ottoman populace. Ruthlessness and vengeance against the enemy and the plundering of his property became indelibly etched into the youngster's mind. Remarkably, as a direct result of his father's constant transfers from post to post he learnt to speak seven languages.

In his eighteenth year, the powerfully built, over 1.8 metres tall, Franz became an ensign

in Count Palffy's regiment. Being a fine swordsman who also had a short, volatile temper he frequently got himself involved in duels. Three years later, after Franz's only surviving elder brother died, his father asked him to leave the army and manage the family's huge estate at Brestowitz in Slavonia. Around this time he met, fell instantly in love with, and married the daughter of General von Tillier, the commandant of Peterwardein. The newly weds settled down on the Trenck estate and within a short while three children, two of whom died in infancy, were born.

In 1734, accompanied by twenty Pandours from his estate for protection against marauding brigands, Franz rode to a local village fair to buy some horses. After several of the Pandours horses were stolen, a fight broke out with the villagers. One villager was killed. As a consequence Franz languished for several weeks in gaol before the provincial governor, Count Khevenhüller, set him free. Soon after Franz and his family moved to his father's estate at Leitschau. But sadly destiny was not going to bring him much happiness, for tragically twelve months later his wife and only surviving child died in an epidemic.

As Austria and Russia went to war against Turkey in 1736 Austria found itself in serious trouble. Incompetent and fraudulent Government Ministers and officials had left its army poorly equipped and its frontier fortresses in a virtual state of ruin. Things were getting decidedly out of control, as marauding Turks overran districts around the Trenck estates. Franz felt he had no choice; he simply had to get involved. However his offer to the Government to field his own corps of 4000 men at his expense—where his corps would live off the land and enemy booty—was rejected. In frustration Franz took 300 recruits from his own estates and joined the Russian army as a second captain in Kuming's hussar regiment. He reached Kiev in February 1738.

Unfortunately, Franz's volatility made it virtually impossible for him to keep out of trouble. Once he quarrelled with his superiors after his men were not paid on time. Another time things got decidedly hot after he accused his commanding officer of cowardice. Within a year or so the ruthless, fearless Franz von der Trenck was promoted to a major in the Orlov Dragoons. Ferocious battles broke out in the Ukraine against the Turks. And always in the background spluttered Franz's short-fused temper. It always seemed only a matter of time before it would explode. One day while on parade his commander Colonel Meyer physically shook and reprimanded him. Franz reacted as expected. He knocked him to the ground! The Russian reaction was just as swift. Franz was thrown into gaol, where he suffered dreadfully in appalling conditions. Fortunately several months later, in February 1740, he found himself being escorted to the Russian border. The border guards stopped him taking his two mistresses with him—being captured during the recent campaign they were considered to be prisoners of war.

Meanwhile the Hungarian provinces of Slavonia and Croatia were being overrun by Turkish bandits who terrorized the populace and extracted huge contributions from them. A short while after he returned home some of Franz's tenants were attacked and tortured. Franz went red with rage, gathered up some 200 Pandours under his command and went



23. Baron Franz von der Trenck

seeking revenge. It was a bloody, cruel conflict. Whenever the Turks captured a Pandour he was either impaled or viciously brutalized. The Pandours retaliated with the same medicine, by decapitating captured Turks and putting their heads up on poles in the villages where they had committed atrocities. Franz himself went after the head of the bandit chief Bidak, and soon got it. After a year of warfare, he had achieved what no one else had had the courage to do and had brought the bandits under control. But as so often was to pass, cruel fate again stepped in when the chief magistrate of Essig accused him of taking the law into his own hands. Franz travelled to Vienna and pleaded his case before his Queen Maria Theresia. She pardoned him, gave him a major's commission and allowed him to raise and equip at his own expense a corps of 1000 Pandours.

Maria Theresia had come to the throne on 20 October 1740, upon the death of her father Charles VI of Austria, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Charles' so-called *Pragmatic Sanction* had decreed that if he died without a male heir his daughter would

succeed him. His many years of diplomacy to get the major European powers to abide by the sanction went almost for nought, and for the next seven years or so Maria Theresia was forced to fight her enemies in the War of Austrian Succession, as the major European powers tried to seize as much of her domains as they could. In December Frederick the Great of Prussia led his army into the Austrian province of Silesia to trigger off the First Silesian War. Franz von der Trenck didn't hesitate in deciding to defend his Queen. He recruited all sorts of bandits and misfits, by offering them a general amnesty if they joined his corps. He also included in his offer to them the spoils of war, which understandably they found irresistible. Recruits had to be over 1.8 metres tall and powerfully built. Franz's 1022-strong corps included: a major, two captains, a captain-lieutenant, five ensigns, one quartermaster, one adjutant, two Catholic chaplains, two surgeons, twenty sergeant-majors, five quartermaster sergeants, eighty corporals, twelve trumpeters and 890 men.<sup>4A</sup>

Being the leader of such violent, barely civilized brigands forced Franz to use violent



means such as lynching those of his men who committed atrocities, in an attempt to control them. The Pandours wore eye-catching, Turkish-style uniforms. Their tunics were open at the neck and had wide sleeves. A red cloak covered their shoulders. The bottoms of their loose fitting trouser legs were bound onto their calves by long leather strips which also laced up their shoes. On their heads they wore a red busby bordered with fur. They each carried a musket, a scimitar—a short oriental sword with a curved single-edged blade, which broadens towards the end—two Turkish poniards (small daggers) and two pistols.

The untried Prussian troops won a stunning victory at Mollwitz on 10 April 1741 against the veteran Austrian army, but the victory was only won after King Frederick had fled the battle-field after believing that all was lost. In late May Franz's Pandours stalked, attacked and destroyed a large Prussian supply convoy. Several Austrian merchants travelling with the enemy were massacred after the Pandours got drunk on captured brandy. Franz had been unable to stop them, for when his men were in that state they were uncontrollable. Though the deed was done, the next day he had the leaders of the massacre shot. Trenck was warned by his superiors—ill treatment of civilians and plundering of non combatants by his corps must cease. In September and October further reports by high Austrian officials complained of the corps' lack of discipline and plundering.<sup>1A-C</sup>

Around this time Franz's corps was placed under Field Marshal Count Khevenhüller's command with orders to harass a French force of 15 000 men in Upper Austria. After successfully destroying a rearguard of 100 Frenchmen, Franz's 300 Pandours found themselves surrounded by three enemy regiments. Cleverly he split his force into three, and then simply disappeared up over the mountains. By accident, and blessed by good fortune, his force as it was about to cross the Danube River captured five large ships loaded with corn bound for the French forces at Linz.<sup>1D</sup> In November Franz's corps, now with a strength of 500 men, attacked Steyr, a town defended by 3000 Bavarian infantrymen and a cavalry regiment. Many prisoners and some high ranking officers were captured before the Pandours were forced to retreat under a heavy counter-attack. In this same month Franz was arrested, charged with the massacre of the Austrian merchants. However, after his men threatened to desert, he was eventually found not guilty and reinstated.

The English historian Carlyle and the man he adored, King Frederick II of Prussia, both hated the Pandours. They had no honour—for they did not fight out in the open, in great pitched battles, as tradition decreed they should. Carlyle paid the Pandours an enormous back-handed compliment, saying it was they who prevented the Prussian King from knowing what was happening beyond his own lines.

The Pandours fuming discontent at not being allowed to plunder was sometimes fired up by their own High Command's lack of recognition for their many acts of bravery. Often the enemy, who they so severely and effectively harassed, knew far more about their courageous deeds than did their own High Command. Meanwhile a French-Bavarian force attacked and took the strongly fortified city of Linz in Upper Austria in September. Then as the Saxon army joined the allied forces, Spain began attacking the Austrian possessions in



Italy. Suddenly the Austrian Empire found itself in desperate danger of total collapse and had the allied forces advanced on Vienna it would have fallen. However the French did not want the Bavarian Elector Karl Albrecht, who was about to become Emperor, to become too powerful, so instead they invaded Bohemia and took Prague. In January 1742 Franz von der Trenck was ordered to capture three important, virtually impenetrable, high mountain top passes at Klaus, Windisch-Garten and Spital in Styria. Within a week he and his men had not only accomplished their mission but also had captured 700 soldiers and twenty-two officers.<sup>1E</sup>

An Austrian army led by Prince Charles of Lorraine had been laying siege to Linz for around a month when Franz's corps, now up to its full strength of 1000 men, arrived there in mid-January. A week or so later, surging forward through heavy snow, his Pandours attacked and captured the enemy's front-line trenches. The terrifying, savage, murderous, screaming Pandours then drove back a battalion of grenadiers, crossed three lines of palisades and got into the Carmelite Monastery.<sup>2A</sup> From there captured field artillery pieces were used to great effect against the enemy. Soon the Pandours were in the streets, fighting in hand-to-hand combat against the French. Then the main Austrian attack began. With one side of the city already taken by the Pandours and heavy bombardment on the other three sides, the garrison was forced to surrender.

Franz's Pandours next task was to levy contributions on the people of Bavaria. The booty, apart from swelling the Imperial war chest, also filled Trenck's coffers to overflowing. Vehse wrote that his plunder alone could have amounted to 2 000 000 florins,<sup>4B</sup> a princely sum indeed! Always ahead of the Pandours spread the fear that they were able to manifest, so much so that many a town surrendered almost without a fight. Deggendorf fell in this way. So did Reichenfalls and its garrison of 300 infantrymen and 700 armed peasants. As a soldier, Franz was fearless and ruthless. He always led from the front and rarely yielded ground. At Lengries his corps, just 200 strong at the time, attacked a force of 1500 armed insurgents. After a fierce battle the Pandours overwhelmed the defenders. Field Marshal Khevenhüller, in a letter dated 27 May 1742, praised Trenck's bravery to his Queen.<sup>4C</sup>

The Peace of Breslau, signed on 11 June 1742, ended the First Silesian War between Austria and Brandenburg-Prussia. The Austrians had been humbled and forced to cede Silesia, apart from several towns and the county of Glatz. Though that conflict was far from resolved, at least it was on hold for the time being. Nevertheless, the war of the Austrian Succession continued. In the summer of 1742 Franz's corps was instrumental in regaining Munich. In northern Bavaria he and his men constantly ambushed the enemy and raided their supply columns. In one raid alone he managed to steal almost 1000 cattle and sheep. The Diesenstein Castle was next to fall. But it was only taken after fierce hand-to-hand fighting in which the Pandours, supported by 500 volunteer soldiers from other regiments, terrifyingly and brutally cut down the defenders with their scimitars. Inside the castle Franz suffered awful damage to his face and body after a powder magazine exploded and ignited the powder horns attached to his belt. For the next ten days he fought for his life, but undoubtedly his big heart pulled

him through. From that time onwards his face remained a dusky blue colour. Again Franz's commanding officer, Field Marshal Khevenhüller, wrote to the Queen. He praised Franz's bravery, detailed the actions he had been involved in in Upper Austria and recommended his promotion to a lieutenant colonel. The Queen ratified the promotion in August.<sup>1F</sup>

Next Franz's corps attacked the castle of Au. After a fierce battle in which many men fell, almost as expected, the garrison capitulated. The castle's massive magazine store soon went up in a huge fire-storm. By September 1742 the fierceness of the war had reduced Franz's corps by eighty-five per cent to barely 150 men. Consequently, before its next battle it was reinforced by 300 Croats and two companies from Andrassy's regiment. Though the heavily armed fortress of Cham was protected by over sixty guns, the Pandours were undeterred. After three of their company, disguised as (probably ugly) peasant women, sneaked into the town and set it on fire, the remainder of their comrades overran the trenches and turned the captured enemy guns on the town. The exploding powder magazine sent the populace fleeing for their lives. While Franz rounded up the 800 or so fleeing Bavarian troops, the Pandours and Croats still in the town went berserk behind his back by slaughtering all the men and raping all the women they caught. This incident was later used against Franz by his enemies. He himself must have felt personally responsible for the massacre for in his 1749 will he left 4000 gulden for a hospital to be set up for the victims of his 1741-42 Bavarian campaign.

The war frequently extracted a terrible toll on Franz's Pandours, so much so that his corps was often severely undermanned. As previously mentioned, from time to time they were reinforced by troops from other regiments. Yet in spite of the terrible, debilitating casualties the effectiveness of the corps was nothing short of stunning. In less than one year it had not only captured nine staff officers and 4500 junior officers and men, but had blown up many magazines and stolen huge amounts of enemy supplies. Franz spent the winter in Vienna where society feted him as a hero. For a while he even lived with the beautiful Baroness von Lestocq before returning to the battle front in Bavaria in late March.

Throughout July and August 1743 Franz's corps raided and extracted levies from people in the French province of Alsac. The fearsome, lightning strikes of the Pandours sapped the enemy's morale. Though his successes were stunning, Franz had a huge weight resting upon his shoulders which would eventually help bring about his demise, and put him into the hands of his enemies in Vienna. Prince Charles had warned him to keep strict control over his troops, but the task was nigh on impossible. Many of his men were little better than savages. Nevertheless, whenever he personally caught them committing atrocities he hung them from the nearest tree. In December Franz's Pandours were unjustly accused of indiscretions. After quarrelling with General von Berlichingen Franz was recalled to Vienna for insubordination. Fortunately this time Prince Charles' support—combined with his brilliant successes during the last two years—saved him.

Early in the new year Franz personally recruited men for his corps, bringing it up to a strength of 3000 men. Recruits were easily found, for all the young Slavonians had seen the

booty the Pandours had returned home with. As his revitalized unit paraded before its Queen Maria Theresia Franz promised her he would be the first man to cross the Rhine River at its most dangerous and strategically important point, at the head of a 20 000 strong Austrian army. That he kept his word was confirmed by a despatch written by Contarini in July 1744.<sup>1G</sup> In that action Franz, together with half his men who crossed the Rhine near Philipsburg, decimated three Bavarian cavalry regiments. By 03 July the Austrian army had safely established itself on French soil. Prince Charles praised Franz's courage and prudence. Then the Queen soon confirmed his recommendation that Franz be promoted to a full colonel. Meanwhile King Louis XV sent 60 000 French troops to Alsac-Lorraine to oppose the Austrian force.

Frederick II of Prussia cleverly waited for the Austrians to be completely entangled against the French before he charged into Bohemia in mid-August to take Prague and so trigger off the Second Silesian War. Franz's 3500 strong corps led the advance guard of the Austrian army as it raced to meet Frederick's forces. The Pandours were so successful at cutting off the Prussian supply lines, that its army often found itself on half rations. Frederick wrote that the Pandours had prevented his scouts from finding out what the Austrian army was getting up to.

At best Franz's Pandours were wild, uncivilized bandits. Though his many attempts to discipline them worked for a while, inevitably from time to time they lost their heads and went back to raping and pillaging. In early October Franz's corps, together with his superior Nadasty's corps, attacked the rear guard of the retreating Prussian army and got themselves entangled in a nine hour battle with the enemy. The Austrian archives praise the victorious feats of its irregular troops led by Trenck and Nadasty.<sup>1H</sup> In late October Franz and half of his corps, some 500 men, laid siege to Budweiss. Casualties were heavy. He lost seventeen officers and 190 men. The Austrian war records mention Franz 'heading the attack' as he swam across the swollen, freezing cold Moldau River and then scaled up the near perpendicular walls of the fortress. Thirty-two Prussian officers including General von Derschau (most likely a relative of Franz's cousin Frederick von der Trenck), and 900 men were captured.<sup>2B</sup> Within another two days Franz also captured the fortress at Frauenberg, which was forced to surrender because of lack of water. A week earlier his men had cunningly cut off its water supply, and the other half of his force had maintained the siege while he had attacked Budweiss.

On 13 November 1744 Nadasty's and Franz von der Trenck's corps' stormed Kolin, where King Frederick had few troops to protect him.<sup>2C</sup> The capture of the great King seemed imminent when fate intervened as a three-pound cannon-ball smashed into Franz's left leg. Though almost certain of victory the Pandours then withdrew.

Franz entered Vienna in mid-January 1745 to the cheers of an adoring populace. His grateful Queen Maria Theresia ordered him to present himself before her. On 20 January Charles VII, Emperor in name only of the Holy Roman Empire, died and Maria Theresia became an Empress. Throughout March Franz recruited another 800 Pandours from his

Hungarian estates, and then set about training them by using them to clean out the bandits who had again infested Slavonia. On 04 June King Frederick decisively beat the Austrians at Hohenfriedberg and headed for Bohemia. Three weeks later Franz rejoined his corps. In early September at the head of the Raab and Grosswardein regiments, the Szigetter hussars and 2500 Pandours he joined Field Marshal St Andre and attacked Neustadt. Within two weeks the enemy was forced to abandon the city and withdraw. The Pandours continued to snap at the heels of the enemy. King Frederick paid the irregulars of Nadasty and Trenck the greatest of compliments: 'In order that the troops might not be exposed to affronts 2000 horse and 8000 foot were necessary for convoys, and to cover forage: each bottle of straw was bought by a skirmish.'<sup>3</sup>The Pandours worried Frederick so much that he wrote a book for his generals which included two chapters on how to fight Pandours when both attacking and retreating.

Though the battle of Soor on 30 September was disastrous for Austria, it had even more dire consequences for Franz von der Trenck. King Frederick's army was 18 000 men strong. As 30 000 Austrians secretly approached the enemy through a forest, Trenck and Nadasty, with 5000 and 7000 men respectively, were to attack from the rear. Though outnumbered by more than two to one King Frederick quite remarkably won the battle! But even more amazingly neither Trenck's nor Nadasty's men took part. By the time Nadasty's men got to the Prussian camp its soldiers and King had left for the front. But instead of setting out in pursuit of the foe, the irregulars decided to plunder and pillage. Trenck's corps arrived at the camp thirty minutes later, saw what Nadasty's men were up to, and grabbed their share of the spoils of war. And what riches there were! All of the Royal baggage, a hundred or so Royal servants and grooms, the King's silverware and some 80 000 ducats were seized. Nadasty's Croats raped the camp women, though at Trenck's subsequent court-martial his Pandours were blamed. Finally, on 25 December 1745 the Second Silesian War ended with the signing of the Peace of Dresden.

Without exception, Franz von der Trenck had always led his troops from the front into battle, and he expected the officers under his command to do likewise. Those who had held back, he had always summarily dismissed. Unfortunately for the courageous Franz, many of the embittered cowards had returned to Vienna, where they plotted his downfall. The time was right for them to bring him down! Franz's enemies accused him of capturing the King of Prussia during the battle of Soor, and afterwards of allowing him to escape for a large bribe. He was also held responsible for the defeat, in that he had plundered King Frederick's camp instead of attacking the Prussian army. Further accusations against him flowed like a river. He had allowed, even encouraged, his Pandours to commit atrocities and plunder both within and outside the Empire. He had defrauded the war chest and had maltreated his officers and men. Certainly Franz had acquired enormous wealth from the captured booty he had pocketed himself. Undoubtedly he had defrauded his Empress' Treasury. But his most telling mistake was not to share the spoils of war with his superiors, as custom demanded!

Both Prince Charles of Lorraine and Field Marshal Count Khevenhüller did their best to defend their courageous Pandour colonel. But Franz's powerful enemies, especially the Court Counsellor von Weber and General Löwenwalde who both hated him, mobilized the forces against him. Had Franz paid off his accusers with large sums of money the charges against him probably would have been withdrawn. Sadly his Trenck family stubbornness would not allow him to yield. Foolishly one evening in Vienna while attending the theatre, in the presence of the Empress, Franz attacked an officer he had cashiered, his chief enemy, Captain Gossau. The last incident that would eventually break him had been laid in position. That night Franz was arrested. A few days later his court-martial began. Incredibly the trial went on for fifteen months. General Löwenwalde, who became the Court President, paid many people large sums of money to give evidence against Trenck. Even so, of the 164 charges levelled against him, the defendant was able to refute all but nine!

In court a letter written by Prince Charles explained what had happened at Soor. Apparently an artillery officer sent with orders that Franz's corps attack the Prussians had become lost, and unfortunately he had not delivered the orders until it was too late. The Court President, General Löwenwalde, wanted Trenck's neck and his possessions. After he said something derogatory to the accused, an enraged Trenck flew at him. Franz was thrown into prison. The trial went on and on. Finally Löwenwalde presented Franz's death warrant to the Empress. She refused to sign it. For a while things appeared to be turning in Franz's favour when a Royal Decree ordered a complete revision of the whole trial. But alas, it was in vain. Franz had made too many enemies and they simply persevered until he was sentenced to imprisonment for life. In August 1748 Franz was locked up in the Spielberg Fortress, at Brunn in Moravia.

Franz von der Trenck was a fanatical subject of his Empress Maria Theresia, and a soldier of enormous courage and ability. Though it may be possible to question his methods, he was undoubtedly a very effective and much feared, even hated, foe of the Prussian King Frederick the Great. The enormously powerful Franz had given his all for his Empress. Eight years of warfare, including two in Russian service, had taken its toll. This combined with the long trial, undertaken mainly by dishonourable men who wanted his fortune, wore him down. Such a free spirit like Franz was not able to imagine any future at all in being caged up like a wild animal for the rest of his life. So apparently he decided to make a sensational exit. Supposedly after predicting the day and time of his death, at the appointed moment he poisoned himself. It was 04 October 1749. Some people suspect he faked his own death, and made a successful escape in a coffin. But that is another story!

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## **BARON FRANZ von der TRENCK**

The main information source for this chapter, including all the references below, were taken from Teichman's *Pandour Trenck*.<sup>4</sup>

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